SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN ITALY, 1968-78

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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1983

SYNOPSIS

The thesis analyses the development of social movements in Italy in the period from 1968 to the end of the following decade, with particular reference to the Milanese experience and a focus on the 1968-9 years. It argues that the late '60's represent a transitional moment; whilst industrial class conflicts dominated oppositional politics in 1968-9, the student movement anticipated the radical redefinitions of politics brought about by the social movements of the 1970's. The changing relationship between social movements and the conceptualisation of social conflicts is the central theme.

The thesis is divided into five parts. Part 1 outlines approaches to the analysis of social protest which are considered especially useful because of their concern with agency and the specific dynamics of social movements; Part 2 gives a historical introduction to the origins of the crisis of 1968-9; Part 3 is a case study of the student movement, and Part 4 of the workers' movement, both concentrating on the 1968-9 developments in Milan. Part 5 outlines their consequences for the formation of oppositional politics in the 1970's. It returns to the theme of 'old' and 'new' political forms, taking the cases of red terrorism, feminism and youth protest. It is argued that the emergence of new social movements has provoked a fundamental questioning of categories of social analysis with important consequences for both political theory and practice.

This thesis is approximately 140,000 words long.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There were moments when it seemed to me that this thesis would never be completed; like Sisyphus' stone it kept rolling back. It was the support, friendship and good company of Charlotte Brunsdon, Myra Connell and Janice Winship which made it possible to get through some dark hours, and to finally complete the work. I want also to thank Paul Ginsborg, who gave me invaluable help and advice when it was most needed, Liliana Grilli for her kind hospitality in Milan, and Antonietta Torchi, who has been a continuous source of encouragement and ideas. Whatever the value of this thesis to others, it has been important for me in introducing me to Italian people and their culture. For this I am deeply grateful to Italian friends, and to all those who helped me so generously when I was doing my research in Milan. Lastly, I'd like to say how much I owe to discussions with Richard Johnson, who has been both a stimulating and caring supervisor, and to members of the Maypole discussion group, with whom I have talked over many of the themes which are taken up in this thesis. My thanks also to John Solomos and Martin Chalmers for their help in the final stages of thesis completion, and to Carole Tayler for typing so quickly and patiently. While I am responsible for what has been written (warts and all), I hope that those who have helped me with the writing of this thesis find something in it which will interest them.

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GLOSSARY OF ORGANISATIONS

Since the reader may not be familiar with the trade unions and political organisations in Italy, which, to make matters difficult, are often referred to in the text using abbreviations (e.g. PCI, instead of Italian Communist Party), this glossary provides a brief guide. It is not comprehensive, but covers those organisations most frequently mentioned.

The Unions

Italian unions are divided into 3 confederations:

Confederazione Generale Italiana dei Lavoratori (CGIL)
Confederazione Italiana dei Sindicati Liberi (CISL)
Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL)

Each of these is in turn divided into 'categories' according to industry (hence FILTEA-CGIL is the textile workers' 'category').

CGIL — is the biggest trade union organisation, with 2½ million members in 1968. Communist and Socialist parties (2/3 and 1/3 respectively) are heavily, though not exclusively, represented at all levels.

CISL — is the second union organisation with about 1½ million members in 1968. It was formed as a result of a break away from the CGIL in 1948 and for many years it was dominated by the Christian Democrats, though its basis is not confessional.

UIL — is the third union, with about ½ a million members in 1968. It includes socialists (45%), social democrats (30%) and republicans (25%) in its leadership.

In the engineering sector attempts to overcome this tripartite structure saw the establishment of the Federazione Lavoratori Metalmeccanici (FLM) in 1972, but the majority of members belong first to an affiliate 'category'

and those who only hold cards of the FLM are a minority.

The affiliate categories are:

FIOM (Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici) is composed of engineering manual and white collar workers and is part of the CGIL. In 1968 it had 271,000 members.

FIM (Federazione Italiana della Metallurgia) is part of the CISL. In 1968 it had 170,000 members.

UILM (Unione Italiana dei Lavoratori della Metallurgia) is part of the UIL. In 1968 it had 103,000 members.

ACLI (Associazioni Cristiane Lavoratori Italiani) was founded in 1944 to organise Catholic workers separately from the CGIL. Dominated by Vatican and Christian Democrat Party influences, the ACLI became more independent in the late '60's.

MO (Movimento Operaio) is the generic term meaning the official workers' movement. Its British equivalent would be the 'Labour Movement'.

Workplace Representation

Internal Commission (Commissione Interna) - factory-based representative bodies elected by all workers irrespective of union membership. Their bargaining role was heavily circumscribed and by the late 1960's they were often out of touch with shopfloor opinion. Hence their replacement by Factory Council post 1969.

Delegates (Delegati) - the nearest British equivalent is the shopsteward, but they do not in the Italian case necessarily belong to a union. They are elected representatives who came into being during the Hot Autumn mobilisations, and were later made official.

Factory Council (Consiglio di Fabbrica) - the successor to the Internal Commission, it is composed to delegates and represents all workers in a workplace. Set up in the wake of the Hot Autumn, it was, however, much more firmly based on the shopfloor.

CUB (Comitati Unitari di Base) - rank-and-file workers' organisations set up independently of the unions in 1968-9, mainly in large factories in the North. After 1969 they were increasingly dominated by political organisations.

Zone Council (Consiglio di Zona) - set up in the early '70's as part of the unions' campaign for social reforms. They were composed largely of delegates from Factory Councils in an area. However, the Zone Councils remained on the drawing-boards, and never took root.

Employers' Associations

Confindustria (Confederazione dell'Industria Italiana) is the organisation of private employers, although up until 1959 it also represented the state sector.

Intersind Body representing state sector employers.

Political Parties

DC (Democrazia Cristiana) has been the party of government since 1948. Its membership is almost exclusively Catholic and its support comes from different classes, although its policies have favoured free enterprise capitalism. In May 1968 it won 39% of the vote, and 266 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) - the largest working class party with a membership of 1½ millions in 1968, and 27% of the vote in the May 1968 election and 177 seats. It was in the government from 1945 to 1947, but otherwise represented the main opposition force. The party paper is 'L'Unità'.

PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano) - the first workers' party in Italy, it was greatly weakened by fascism. In 1947 a social democratic grouping broke away, rejoined the party in 1966 and then left again in 1969. In 1968 it got 15% of the vote in combination with the PSDI and 91 seats. The PSI participated in government

from 1963 to 1972. The party paper is 'L'Avanti!'.

MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) - a fascist party. It got 4% of the vote in 1968 and 24 seats.

PRI (Partito Repubblicano Italiano) - a historic lay centre party which took part in the Centre Left government from 1963. It got 2% of the vote in May 1968, and 9 seats.

PLI (Partito Liberale Italiano) - a historic lay right wing party. It got 6% of the vote in May 1968, and 31 seats.

PSDI (Partito Social Democratico Italiano) - a break away from the PSI. In the April 1963 election it got 6% of the vote, and 33 seats.

PSIUP (Partito Socialista di Unita Proletaria) was a left wing split from the PSI following its entry into government in 1963. Its strength was in the CGIL. In May 1968 it got nearly 5% of the vote, and 23 seats.

Il Manifesto was a left wing split from the PCI of 1969 grouped around a journal of that name. It was important as an intellectual current rather than as an organised political force. It theorised a council communism of Gramscian inspiration.

AO (Avanguardia Operaia) was set up in 1968-9. Although it had roots in Trotskyism, it called itself Marxist-Leninist. It was closely associated with the factory rank-and-file committees (CUB's) in Milan. From December 1968 it published a bi-monthly journal called 'Avanguardia Operaia'.

LC (Lotta Continua) was formally constituted in 1969 as a fusion of elements (ex-members of Potere Operaio, student movement activists), and identified itself with a variety of social movements, of which the Fiat rebellion of 1969 was the most formative. From November 1969 it published the weekly paper 'Lotta Continua'.

PO or Pot. Op. (Potere Operaio) - founded in Tuscany in 1966-67 by activists associated with the reviews Quaderni Rossi and Classe Operaia. Important for its theoretical positions and for isolated but well-publicised interventions in factory conflicts in 1967-8. From September 1969 published a weekly paper called 'Potere Operaio'.

ML (Marxisti-Leninisti)
There were several groups which claimed to be faithful to the political line of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China, although only the PC d'I (Partito Comunista d'Italia - not to be confused with the PCI) was officially recognised. In October 1968 the Unione (Unione dei Communisti Italiani Marxisti-Leninisti) was founded, with the paper 'Servire il Popolo', but fell apart in 1969. In that year Movimento Studentesco was set up in Milan. Based in the State University it took its name from the student movement but was a rigid ML sect.

PRI (Partito Radicale) - first set up in 1955, it was more a current of opinion than a party. Refounded in 1967 it campaigned chiefly on civil rights issues and against the fascist hang-overs in the institutions (laws, Church privileges). Its influence grew in the 1970's when it promoted referendum campaigns on abortion and other issues.

'Today the political arena is covering over with a new flora; later will come new gardeners; we should savour while we can the heady scents of these wild flowers and unruly weeds, so invigorating after so much deodorant and disinfectant. The functionaries and doctrinarians of the former social movements rub their eyes in bewilderment: these struggles are not in the place reserved for them; they do not speak the language they learnt in the last century.'(1)

'If the multiple points of social contact once characterising the city can be reawakened under terms appropriate to affluence, then some channels for experiencing diversity and disorder will again be open to men. The great promise of city life is a new kind of confusion possible within its boundaries, an anarchy that will not destroy men, but make them richer and more mature.(2)

(1) Alain Touraine, Zsuzsa Hegedus, François Dubet and Michel Wieviorka, Anti-Nuclear Protest: The Opposition to Nuclear Energy in France (Cambridge, 1983), p. 180.

(2) Richard Sennett, The Uses of Disorder (London, 1971), p. 92.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Writing history necessarily involves writing about the present. The questions that we ask of the past, however remote, arise out of the preoccupations and the problematics that we live with day-to-day in the present. To recognise this is not to give carte blanche to those who instrumentally reconstruct history as if people always behave in the same way; rather it makes it possible to think about continuities and differences, and thereby to relativise our own experiences. As Keith Thomas has observed this approach has positive features:

> 'The justification of all historical study must ultimately be that it enhances self-consciousness, enables us to see ourselves in perspective and helps us towards that greater freedom that comes from self-knowledge.'(1)

Anyone writing about contemporary events can hardly avoid being aware of how the recent past is liable to be retrospectively 'changed' in a matter of months. The problem is to put developments into a historical perspective.

Writing a thesis about the Italian social conflicts of 1968-9 has involved a continuous coming-to-terms with shifting points of view and perspectives. Over the past decade, '1968' (a date which has become shorthand for referencing the social movements of the late '60's)(2), has come to signify very different things. It is possible, broadly speaking, to identify a predominance of 'positive' accounts up until 1976; the social movements were variously described as 'modernising', and 'democratising' features

of a more open and pluralist society, or as the vehicles for a socialist revolution. Then, from 1977 onwards, 'negative' appraisals came into the ascendancy; the movements were criticised for 'extremism', for propagating political violence and for creating cultural illiteracy.(3) However, across the 'positive-negative' divide there have been many other attempts to analyse developments in their contradictoriness and complexity. Not least, the new social movements (e.g. feminism and youth politics) have stimulated critical analyses of the '68 experiences, without simply celebrating or criminalising that past.

The thesis reflects the times in which it was written. The project was initiated in 1976; fieldwork was done between April 1977 and June 1978 (a period which including the youth riots of '77, and the assassination of Aldo Moro); then it was written up, in fits and starts, between 1978 and 1983. The reader will be able to detect the hopes, fears and doubts of an experience which the writer participated in, even though as an observer. But the thesis aims to reflect on both how the social movements of 1968-9 have been appropriated and interpreted by participants and commentators, and to give a different account of the events themselves. It is this double movement between constructions of past and present which structures and informs the final draft.

The thesis is divided into five parts: Part 1 outlines theories of social conflict; Part 2 provides a historical introduction to the origins of the 1968-9 crisis; Parts 3 and 4 comprise case studies of the student and workers' movements of 1968-9, with a focus on Milanese events; Part 5

analyses the routes leading out of 1968 to the oppositional politics of the following decade.

In Part 1, it is argued that structuralist and functionalist approaches have failed to produce adequate accounts of social conflicts. This is because they do not analyse the forms of subjectivity that are the key to understanding society as process. Instead, the thesis draws on the writings of sociologists and historians who have made subjectivity and agency central to their analyses of social conflict. It is argued that movements have dynamics which are internal to their development, even though they are related to other social forces. Their causes, the forms they take, and their measure of success cannot be explained without reference to the perceptions of the actors and their sense of identity.

It is this process whereby individuals and social groups become aware of the injustice of their situation, and act to redress their grievances that is the central theme of the thesis. As historians and sociologists have pointed out, protest and rebellion are 'patterned' and move in cycles, but their particular forms and objectives are historically specific. The movements of the 1960's generally, and those of 1968-9 in Italy, are especially fascinating because many of the established features of protest were changing.

The late '60's were years in which social movements became an international phenomenon. Third World peasant insurgency, revolts by black minorities, workers' strikes and student agitation not only took place in the same period, but were used as metaphors in different contexts. For

example, protagonists spoke of 'bringing Vietnam into the factories', whilst the black movement became a 'defining political metaphor and inspiration' for the women's and gay movements in the United States.(4) Of these movements, the workers' movement, with its long history, had traditionally represented the paradigmatic forms of social insubordination. But this period is marked by the emergence of new movements and new political forms. The exchanges, interaction and competition between the 'new' and the 'old' generated radical transformations in the nature of social conflict within capitalist countries.

In Parts 3 and 4 this theme of the 'new' and 'old' movements is taken up through case studies of two of these movements in Italy in 1968-9 - the student movement and the workers' movement. The Italian experiences were very different from those in other countries: the connections made between the different social movements, the radicalness of the worker rebellion in some factories, the intensity of popular anti-state feeling and so on, meant that the crisis of 1968-9 was especially deep. The movements had a more lasting and disruptive effect than elsewhere.

In Part 2 this peculiarity of the Italian crisis is related to the country's historical development ('the first of the last, and the last of the first'). It is argued that the Italian case is interesting because it can be seen to combine conflicts which are said to be typical of both a 'developing' and a 'developed' country.(5)

The case studies deal mainly with the workers' movement, which is taken to represent the central protagonist

of conflicts in industrial societies, and the student movement, which is taken to be emblematic of a new form of oppositional politics. In 1968-9 it was these movements which dominated the political scene, and provided the models for political action in the community (e.g. housing struggles). It will be argued that these movements shaped experiences and ideas which were worked through in the following decade. While detailed accounts are given for the 'years of the break' - 1968-9 - the period in which these movements are considered takes account of their gestation in the 1960's, and then of the aftermath in the early 1970's. Throughout the case studies, the movements are examined using Milanese examples.

Taking Milan as the vantage point from which to survey Italian social movements as a whole inevitably involves difficulties. In fact, the Milanese experience cannot be said to represent or typify national developments. These varied from city to city (not to mention towns and villages). Milan is a city with its own particular social and economic structure, and political and cultural traditions. However, its importance to Italian life, and its role as a centre for a great diversity of activities, meant that Milan was also a centre of social conflicts.

Milan has been called the 'real capital' ('il capitale morale') of Italy because it is a major commercial, financial and industrial centre where many multinational companies have their headquarters, in preference to Rome. Apart from having La Scala, the opera-house, and Il Corriere della Sera, the Italian equivalent of The Times, Milan has a complex

cultural infrastructure; this includes publishing houses (these account for half the capital and a quarter of the employees in the sector), two leading universities and numerous theatres, cinemas and so on. Historically, Milan had a crucial role in the formation of the nation-state, while its geographical position has helped make it the most cosmopolitan of Italian cities.(6) In the early '60's, Milan symbolised the 'economic miracle' and progressive modernism. But in the late '60's, it was turned into a theatre of urban conflicts.

Because Milan was a cultural, economic and political centre in the 1960's and '70's, it was also a site of a wide range of social movements. The universities and engineering factories were in the eye of the storm in 1968-9, and, in the following years, urban conflicts over housing and other resources were an important feature in the city's life. The various movements, notably the feminist movement, built up networks and counter-cultural activities so that an 'alternative Milan' came into being.(7) Thus, although the Milanese case cannot be taken as representative in a simple sense, the rationale for studying this city lies in the range of the movements which developed there. Furthermore, these were an important point of reference to oppositional forces elsewhere in Italy. In 1968-9 only events in Turin were of comparable significance.(8)

Making a case study of Milanese movements also has offered advantages in terms of sources. Secondary sources are plentiful, and include excellent studies. This is largely due to the work of sociologists based in the Faculty of

Political Sciences in the State University, many of whom were participants in and observers of the social conflicts. Their work has provided a backbone for this thesis, particularly for the chapters on the workers' movement, but also for the discussion of theoretical approaches in Part 1.(9) The primary sources used to range from daily papers, magazines and journals to leaflets, pamphlets and oral accounts.(10)

There were some problems with getting access to documentation on the movements post 1968. The libraries and institutes have not yet managed to collect and organise much of the ephemera (leaflets etc.), and no serious attempt has been made to build up oral history archives.(11) Therefore private collections of material were used, along with tape-recorded interviews and fieldnotes. This was particularly important for Part 3, while Part 4 is more dependent on secondary sources.

Part 5 is also largely constructed out of secondary sources, and is more schematic than the case studies. (There is also less focus on Milanese examples.) It follows up the theme of 'old' and 'new' forms of social conflict, returning to some of the analyses outlined in Part 1. The purpose of Part 5 is to bring into relief the process whereby the late '60's movements constituted a point of departure and reference for the protagonists of the movements of the '70's. It tries to show how the re-making of that past was a condition of existence for feminists and others of the new social movements. New subjectivities, perceptions of

injustices and desires for change were, it is maintained, produced by transforming existing political repertoires. This process is examined in relation to three examples of oppositional politics.

The examples have been selected as representing 'old' or 'new' forms. Thus, red terrorism is considered as a politics which appeals to a Leninist revolutionary orthodoxy, and a heroic past of class struggles, which are counterposed to the ideas of social movements. It represents a version of an 'old' politics. By contrast, youth protest and, more importantly, feminism are taken to represent the emergence of a 'new' politics based on social movements. Although all these political currents had their roots in the 1968-9 movements, it is argued that those protagonists who freed themselves of the myths created by 1968, showed a greater understanding and ability to act politically in contemporary society. Those who projected the past into the future headed down a cul de sac with disastrous consequences.

Part 5 concludes by considering the late '70's crisis of oppositional politics in Italy. It was a crisis which put an end to a period of social mobilisations running from 1968 to 1977. Moreover, it reflected back on the whole experience of the decade, provoking massive disillusionment and collective amnesia. But, while this loss of confidence and cultural disorientation was a general phenomenon, it is argued that it hit some harder than others. The crisis was deepest for those most closely associated with a traditional Marxist politics, while the advocates of the new social movements saw it as an opportunity to reaffirm their belief that

oppositional politics had to be radically redefined to deal with changes in the nature of social conflicts.

This transformation of oppositional political forms over the 1968-78 decade in Italy is the object of analysis for this thesis. However, it also looks at how the very terms of political and social analysis changed. The movements of the 1960's and 1970's provoked important developments in the theorisation of social conflicts. It will be argued that these are not only valuable in helping us to understand the historical process better, but that they are useful in giving us a perspective on the complexities and ambiguities of oppositional political forms in contemporary capitalist societies.

FOOTNOTES

General Introduction

1. Keith Thomas, 'History and Anthropology', in Past and Present, 24, 1963, p. 18.

2. The symbolic importance attached to '1968' is linked to the French events of May and June when barricades went up in the streets of Paris. In Italy it is frequently used to refer to 1969 (the year of the Hot Autumn industrial conflicts) as well as to 1968 events. It has also acquired a more general frame of reference so that the international social movements of the 1960's and their cultural effects tend to be bundled together as "68', though in the United States they date back to 1965, and to 1966 in West Germany. In the main text, reference is usually made to the movements of 1968-9 to avoid confusions.

3. Red Terrorism has undoubtedly played a major part in provoking critical evaluations of the 1968-9 movements. A past has been replayed not only in newspaper accounts and sociological studies, but in the court-rooms. Nanni Balestrini writes: 'By now it's a commonplace affirmation to say that the April 7th operation (arrest of a group of extreme left intellectuals in 1979 who in 1983 still had not been put on trial) was designed to criminalise twelve years of struggles by social movements ... and their experiences, behaviour, hopes of change, refusal to passively accept the corruption of public life'; Nanni Balestrini, 'Anche un processo agli intellettuali', in Alfabeta, 49 (June) 1983, p. 37.

5. David Edgar, 'Reagan's hidden agenda: racism and the new American right', quoted by Paul Gilroy, 'Steppin' out of Babylon - race, class and autonomy', in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, The Empire Strikes Back, London 1982, p. 296.

5. This theme is dealt with in the thesis in terms of how conflicts have been defined in the discourses of political protagonists and commentators as 'primitive', 'modern' and so on. However, the basic premise of this approach, namely, that historical development is measurable by an abstract model of 'modernisation', is not accepted. For a critique of its application to the Italian case, see Diana Pinto (Ed.), Contemporary Italian Sociology, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 1-30.

6. See E. Dalmasso, Milan: capitale économique de l'Italie (Paris, 1971).

7. A number of reviews produced by the movements were written and published in Milan; these include: Ombre Rosse, Classe, Re Nudo and Erba Voglio. The existence of radical publishers and bookshops facilitated the growth of a 'counter-culture'.

8. Events in Turin and other cities are analysed in the thesis, even though the focus is in Milan.

9. The research work carried out under the direction of Alessandro Pizzorno has been of seminal importance. This is discussed in Chapter 1.

10. It should be noted that the distinction between primary and secondary sources is much less clear when dealing with contemporary history. For example, the work of sociologists in this thesis is sometimes used for the information it provides, and sometimes it is treated as the object of study.

11. The Feltrinelli Institute, for example, has collected some material from the social movements of the late '60's, which has been useful. However, it has to be said that the sources for the 1950's are much more plentiful and better organised. This is not because of a shortage of supply; private collections abound, and many owners would be glad to deposit them, if they could be assured that they would be put to good use. However, the scant attention paid to the documentation of 'contemporary history', combined with a lack of cultural and political will, means that little has been done. Initiatives taken by women historians interested in reconstructing the history of their movement show what can be done where there is the will.

PART 1

EXPLAINING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Introduction

In the 1960's and 1970's there was the growth of an extensive literature on social movements, especially in those countries most affected by the movements. Sociologists and historians in the United States, France and Italy were particularly involved in the work of analysing and theorising the contemporary challenges, even when the object of study was far away in time and space. The movements themselves posed questions because, in Alberto Melucci's words:

> they are a constant provocation to the sociologist ... they continually prevent the reduction of society to the unified and harmonious image which the powerful seeks to impose.(1)

One of the by-products of the movements was, therefore, a considerable body of research and analysis, which came to constitute a new field of study.

Part I will aim to do two things: Chapter I will examine the relationship between the sociology of social movements and the social movements themselves, taking the Italian case as an example. Each national experience has its peculiarities, but the Italian one is especially interesting because of the close involvement of a generation of sociologists in the movements they studied. Whilst the academic field was partly autonomous from everyday debates and political alignments, many of the preoccupations of

researchers, along with the categories of thought and methods of working, were derived from the movements. In turn, sociologists played a role in the movements by introducing new ideas, promoting debate and speaking up for them in public arenas. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce a theme which runs through the thesis; namely, that sociology was an aspect of the social phenomenon that it set out to study. Although it anticipates more extended discussions later in the thesis, it was decided to introduce the theme at the beginning to draw the reader's attention to the conditions in which certain ideas were produced. It is a particular instance of the more general problems of understanding how the social movements provoked a redrawing of political and cultural maps.

In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 there will be an outline of some approaches to the study of social movements, protest and rebellion that were developed in the 1960's and 70's. It will deal with the core problems in explaining the genesis and cycles of movements, focusing on what are thought to be especially useful concepts and analyses. The authors who have been selected for close attention are Alain Touraine, Barrington Moore Jnr., Edward Shorter and Charles Tilley, Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, and several Italian sociologists, of whom the best known is Alessandro Pizzorno. Their work, it will be argued, represents a fruitful new development in the study of social conflict, and that, despite important differences, they share common concerns and problematics.

CHAPTER I: ITALIAN SOCIOLOGISTS AND THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: OBSERVERS AND PARTICIPANTS

Italian sociology developed in post war Italy in an atmosphere that was largely hostile to it; the hostility had carried over from the inter-war years. Diana Pinto, who has written illuminatingly on the formation of the discipline in Italy, observes:

> 'The intellectual world was almost entirely anti-social sciences; liberals saw them as 'sick sciences' and barbaric, whilst for the Left they were 'ideological', and the more so because of their association with American-inspired writings.'(2)

Within the universities sociology came in by the back door. It was not until 1960 that a chair was created, and otherwise sociology was at best tolerated within Law Faculties, or, in the case of the Catholic University of Milan, under the wing of Social Psychology. Deprived of a secure place within the educational system, and without independent sources of finance for research projects, the 'first generation' of sociologists depended heavily on bodies dedicated to regional political reform. In addition, there was support given by the industrialist, Adriano Olivetti, who set up a research centre at Ivrea, near Turin, to study industrial society. Already Italian sociology, Pinto observes, had taken on characteristics which were to orient its development throughout the 1950's and '60's.(3)

Firstly, young sociologists were attached to the world of industry or to centres of local government planning rather than to universities. Secondly, their studies focused on

industrial problems such as the organisation of work, the social consequences of technical innovation, the social composition of the working class and on the problems of planning. Thirdly, this sociology

> "reflected the most advanced aspects of Northern Italy, and thereby opposed itself to the historicism of an Italian culture which underlined the weight of traditional sectors".(4)

Turin and Milan were very much the centres of the nascent discipline.

The role of sociology in political and intellectual life gained a new status when the Centre Left government, composed of Socialists and Christian Democrats, was established at local and national levels in the early 1960's, the years of the Italian 'economic miracle'. It was seen by the new political élites as vital because it attempted to explain the repercussions of the dramatic industrial development on society. Research programmes were promoted in the name of modernisation. Among the most important centres was the Lombard Institute for Social and Economic Research based in Milan, where Massimo Paci, Laura Balbo and Guilio Martinotti, among others, gained their experience as leading members of the 'second generation' of Italian sociologists. Particularly significant among the new areas to be researched was the phenomenon of migration and its social and economic consequences, and the grass-roots organisations of political parties. The latter was studied, according to Pinto, with

the

> 'American criteria of analysis in the hope of creating a peaceful alternation of power, and hence the implicit desire of isolating the Communist Party in order to consolidate a centre which fully accepted the democratic game'.(5)

Although the sociologists for the most part were interested primarily in developing more adequate concepts and approaches within their field (it was a period in which the classic texts, including the work of Weber, Durkheim, Merton and Parsons were being translated into Italian for the first time), their work was oriented by certain political assumptions. Pinto writes:

> 'If one wants to define the essence of Italian sociology in this period, it should be stressed that it was a sociology of the enlightened ('une sociologie des 'lumières''), who wanted to be tied to a 'Prince' surrounded by policymakers. The sociologist defined himself as an expert rather than as a committed participant in social action.'(6)

It is interesting to note that it was the progressive elements in the Christian Democratic Party who were responsible for the establishment of the first faculty of sociology at Trento in 1962. There was something bizarre about the initiative, given that the small town was an isolated provincial stronghold of Catholicism far from the industrial cities. Alessandro Silj writes:

> 'According to its founders, the new university has the function of enriching the over-provincial environment of Trento, and of helping Italy catch up with the other advanced countries, by creating new means with which to manage a society that in its complexity was beyond the comprehension of orthodox economic liberalism. In these

> years one looked with interest and envy at the American universities - the manufacturers of experts not only in science and technology, but also of social scientists who assumed the mantles of the priesthood of neo-capitalism'.(7)

However, the 'reforming Prince' never materialised. The Centre Left did not carry out structural reforms, but maintained the status quo by palliatives which called for no scientific knowledge of society. For their part, the regional research centres wanted quick answers from the sociologists to short-term political questions. The sociologists were consulted less and less, and the centres were closed down.

The changes in the role and orientations, especially of the second generation of sociologists, however, were not just the result of disillusionment, though this was bitter. Crucially, they were swept up in the social movements of the late '60's, which had one of their first epicentres in the sociology faculty at Trento. The promise of making sociology a means of social knowledge and transformation seemed to lie in working with the autonomous mobilisations from below of students and workers against the apparatuses, state and private, which the sociologists had previously served.

The new social conflicts put in question a notion of 'society' based on the dreams of a more harmonious and just order which had been so dear to the planners. However, it would be incorrect to place the sociologists outside the development of the social movements, and to explain their changes of orientation as resulting from external forces. Within Italian sociology there were critical tendencies which grew

through a participation in and interaction with the social movements. These pre-existed the movements in so far as minority sections of Catholic and lay sociologists had a critical relationship to the Centre Left experiment before its sorry demise. Their role was crucial to the development of a sociology of social movements.

Radical Catholic sociology had its headquarters in the Catholic University of Milan where Francesco Alberoni was director of the Institute of Psychology. Alberoni's 'Society and Consumption', published in 1964 was a critique of consumerism, whilst his study of migration of 1967 looked at the social costs of 'industrial progress'. The very success story of advanced capitalism and 'modernisation' were being called in question by him. His critique was close in many respects to that advanced by the Frankfurt School, whose work Alberoni had an important part in introducing to an Italian readership. However, it also stemmed from ethical concerns central to the new radical Catholic humanism. This was directed against both the political and technocratic leaders of the Christian Democrat party and against the values of commercialism and individualism.

Radical Catholic intellectuals were connected with the trade union movement (especially with the engineering workers' section of the CISL, the mainly Catholic confederation).(8) Guido Baglioni, Gian Primo Cella and Bruno Manghi, who taught in the Catholic University in Milan, developed critical analyses of Taylorism in which the central theme was the 'de-humanisation' and 'alienation' of work in the modern factory. Christian ideas of brotherhood, equality and human dignity combined with

American sociologies of work to produce to far-reaching critiques of the psychic and social costs of technological progress. The ideas of the Catholic intelligensia fed into the social movements in which they too were participants. This process will be examined in greater detail later (in Part 3, Chapter), but a brief look here at the experience of Francesco Alberoni might be useful to highlight how the sociologist was involved.

In the early stages of student mobilisation at the Catholic University he developed the seminar in the place of the lecture as a more participatory method of learning, and opened it up to ongoing political debates. He supported the occupations and helped in the organisation of counter-courses. Along with other Catholic radicals he was intent on combining Catholic ideas with the secular ideologies of revolt. In 1968 he moved to Trento University where the authorities, anxious to calm revolt with reasoned discussion, had invited him to set up the equivalent of Berlin's Free University. One observer remarked wryly[9]: 'Here they are worried that Alberoni will 'ride the tiger of protest' and they haven't seen that he is the tiger'. However, Alberoni was caught up in the crossfire between the authorities and the student movement, and quit his post in 1970.

It is difficult to say how three years direct experience of social protest influenced and shaped Alberoni's work, but he seems to have been deeply affected by it. This is apparent in the areas of his research and publications; Statu Nascenti (1968), Classes and Generation (1970),

Italy in Transformation (1976) and Movements and Institutions (1977) all deal with social movements. The first of these is concerned primarily to analyse the 'moment of birth' of mass protest when social groups mobilise and 'explore the boundaries of the possible', whilst the latter works focus more on the interaction of movements and institutions, and on the processes of 'institutionalisation'. The problems that Alberoni confronts are very much those thrown up by contemporary debate in and about the social movements, and not those defined within the traditional party political terms. However, Alberoni's work is also a continual engagement with concepts taken from the founding fathers of sociology, Weber and Durkheim in particular, whom he argues are the most useful for understanding the specific nature of movements. The notions of 'charisma' and 'collective enthusiasm' are especially important for Alberoni, who is interested above all in the forms of subjectivity, experience and consciousness. Models, which were previously applied mainly to religious phenomena, are applied to contemporary developments.

By contrast with the Catholic Left sociologists, the lay camp had its roots more firmly in a Marxist tradition. Its concerns were firstly with the composition of the working class in the modern factory, and with questions of consciousness and subjectivity as expressions of this. These sociologists worked through the reviews Quaderni Rossi and Quaderni Piacentini, which were the organs of what Pinto calls a 'parallel sociology', which developed independently of state and party patronage.

As in the case of Pizzorno and others, they attacked the Crocean legacy that had stood in the way of concrete empirical study, but they aimed to revitalise Marxism as a sociology rather than to replace or relativise it as a method. Romano Alquati, who was editor of Quaderni Rossi from 1961 to early 1963, has described the review as the product of a heterogeneous grouping brought together by a common interest in rediscovering the Marx of Capital and the Grundrisse (especially the writings on modern industry), and in learning from Anglo-Saxon sociology(10). More than this, the participants aimed to reform the unions (and to a lesser extent) the parties of the Left 'from below' by linking them up to the new youth vanguards of the mass production factories. This project had significant political effects, as will be seen in Part 2, Chapter 6 but it was also important for the formation of a sociology of social movements in Italy.

Firstly, the methods of research developed by Quaderni Rossi provided a model. Above all, the review pioneered the practice of 'conricerca', whereby the intellectual on the outside researched jointly with the workers inside a factory. It was partly the response to the logistical problem of information-gathering, but primarily the purpose was to make the workers the subjects, in the sense of protagonists, of study rather than its passive objects. Although, as Alquati remarks, the actual results fell mostly between the stools of theory and empirical research, nevertheless the ambition was to go beyond the accepted ideological definitions in order to

grasp the material realities of life on the shopfloor. In the process, the role of the researcher was redefined as a commitment to the 'movement' of the grass-roots, who looked for an 'organic' link with the working class instead of being a 'traditional intellectual' standing above 'the masses'.

Secondly, the review constituted a meeting place and forum for Left sociologists and economists, trade union officials, party activists and some industrial militants. Along with Quaderni Piacentini, it had an important part in creating a framework and milieu in which sociologists related to political rather than more narrowly academic concerns.

Thirdly, Quaderni Rossi had a great deal of influence in setting an agenda of themes and in outlining concepts with which to analyse society. Above all attention was focused on the mass production factories and on the changing composition of the working class; studies were made of the de-skilling, the divisive effects of the grading and payment systems, the emergence of the new figure of the young semi-skilled worker, and of new forms of insubordination at work. Indeed, Quaderni Rossi contributed in no small measure to Italian sociology's obsession with the 'factory' which was treated as the paradigmatic social structure to which all others were subordinated.

The growth of a sociology of industrial relations took shape in the light of this work, which was formative for a second generation of sociologists, and in the context of the resurgence of social conflict in the period 1966-72. Perhaps

the most important single study, which has acquired the status of orthodoxy, was the Milan research published as a series of factory monographs '<u>Workers' Struggles and the Unions, 1968-72</u>'(11). This was carried out under the direction of Alessandro Pizzorno, a leading sociologist of the first generation. He describes the research process as one of continual interaction between the sociologist and the protagonists of their studies. Unlike the sociology addressed to an academic readership, it did not begin directly from observations of the lacunae or contradictions in the existing body of knowledge. Nor was it directly functional to the requirements of the political actors. Rather, the Milan work attempted to creatively use the ambiguities and conflicts involved in the research:

> 'The general schema which oriented the research, and the very criteria for the selection of data were influenced by the protagonists of the struggles. Research was a continual acquisition not only of new information but of new interpretative hypotheses'.(12)

The active involvement of most of the sociologists in the movements was, of course, crucial in establishing relations of trust and cooperation with the shopfloor militants and trade union officials, who were the primary source of information.

In the first half of the 1970's sociology established itself within the higher education institutions and within the discipline the study of social movements had a central place. The Milan project was based at the Institute for the

Study of Contemporary Society, attached to the State University, and was financed by the CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche). Sociologists had won a new independence and security. The discipline was recognised with its integration into Political Science Faculties in many universities and the creation of new posts. Several universities, including those of Milan and Turin, now had research institutes attached to them which enabled sociologists to undertake research contracts with municipalities, regional authorities and even unions without losing their independence. Publishers, such as Il Mulino, Laterza, De Angeli, Feltrinelli and Etas Kompas, brought out sociology series. Sociology gained not only recognition but a considerable measure of prestige.

The very persistence and renewal of social conflict throughout the 1970's provoked public debate and concern in which sociologists participated as 'experts', informed observers and/or as partisan researchers. This is particularly evident in relation to the trade unions in Italy, which opened their journals to sociologists writing on the problems of union democracy and other 'hot' issues, and which involved them in their own research projects. Pinto comments that for a period the unions emerged as a new 'Prince' in the eyes of intellectuals who sought a force for social transformation with which they could work and identify(13). The parties were more critically regarded in that they had shown themselves to be less sensitive to the needs and aspirations expressed through the social movements, but they too looked to sociologists for advice. In some instances, sociologists even gained a wider readership; Francesco

Alberoni wrote a regular column for the Corriere della Sera in the mid 1970's, in which he treated his readers to analyses of youth revolt, feminism and other contemporary themes[14]. The sociologist became a spokesperson for reasoned discussion and pluralism, and insisted that social conflict and movements of opposition were the sign of a potentially healthy society in the face of institutional torpor and cynicism.

However, the role of sociologists carried with it an inheritance of contradictions. It was perhaps easier for Francesco Alberoni and Alessandro Pizzorno to act as interpreters who translated the language of protest into terms understandable to those in the parties of the Left and the unions than it was for the younger generation of sociologists. The latter felt the pull of the social movements, and the need to keep alive the traditions of a 'para-sociology' they had helped to construct. The struggle to resist 'institutionalisation' can be seen in the example of Bianca Beccalli, who was active in the Quaderni Rossi and continued to edit the Quaderni Piacentini. The women's movement and the youth revolt of the mid and late '70's became not only subjects for study but reproposed some of the older conflicts between sociology as the representative of institutional positions and discourses, and the sociology 'from below' carried out with the protagonists (who were often the students themselves). In turn, the new social movements put in question the narrowness of sociological and Marxist categories. Some of these tensions are visible

in Beccalli's work, and also in Alberto Melucci's writings. Sociology's engagement with social movements in Italy continued to be vital to its debates and development, and it is important to bear this in mind as well as the observation that by 1979 'activists' of the 1968-72 period were learning to become professors in the universities.

Alberto Melucci writes of these tensions and conflicts in the role of intellectuals and sees it as positive that the university and further educational institutions should be a place where they are fought out. He stakes out a position which represents a generation's reflections on the relationship of intellectuals to social movements.

> 'The places for the production of knowledge, such as universities, are 'political' sites in which the demands of social actors and the exigencies of the system meet and conflict. They are part of the public space in which participation and the representation of collective identities take place.'(15)

The task of intellectuals, according to Melucci, should be to sustain openness and fruitful conflict. They should not be defensively corporatist, but neither should they try to deny their specific role by attempting to 'reflect social movements'. Ideally, this would involve 'critical thought, research and invention'. This could be socially useful to movements but would entail a quite different relationship to them to the ones that had so far been experimented with.

The role of 'expert' or the role of 'organic intellectual', which had so far provided the model, were no longer acceptable. The changing order of political and cultural conflicts meant that the social function ascribed to the intellectual by the

state or by the workers' movement was eclipsed. New roles as well as new knowledges had to be worked out.

Because of the salience of social movements in Italian political and intellectual life in the 1960's and '70's, they constituted a crucial area of research. A formidable body of empirical studies was built up, particularly of industrial conflicts, and the best of this was informed by a theoretical approach which broke away from functionalist and determinist models. The work done by the 'Italian School' is especially useful since it focuses on some of the movements which are studied in this thesis. However, other sociologists and historians have addressed the questions of causes and development of social movements from complementary perspectives. In the following chapters the Italian School's theoretical approach will be considered alongside these other contributions.

FOOTNOTES: PART 1

Chapter 1

1. Alberto Melucci (Ed.), Movimenti di Rivolta (Milan, 1976), p. 2.

2. Diana Pinto, "La sociologie dans l'Italie de l'après-guerre, 1950-1980", Revue Française de Sociologie, XXI (1980), p. 234.

3. Ibid., p. 236.

4. Ibid., p. 236.

5. Ibid., p. 240.

6. Ibid., p. 241.

7. Alessandro Silj, Mai più senza fucile (Florence, 1977), p. 34.

8. See Gian Primo Cella and Bruno Manghi, Un sindacato italiano negli anni sessanta (Bari, 1972).

9. Alessandro Silj, Mai più senza fucile, p. 48.

10. Romano Alquati, Sulla Fiat (Milan, 1975), pp. 15-20.

11. Alessandro Pizzorno (Ed.), Lotte operaie e sindacato in Italia (Bologna, 1974-75). Vol. 1, L. Luppi and E. Reyneri, Il settore dell'automobile (Innocenti e Autobianchi), Vol. 2, M. Regini and E. Santi, Il settore degli elettrodomestici (Candy e Ignis), Vol. 3, L. Dolci and E. Reyneri, Il settore elettromeccanica (Magnetti Marelli and Ercole Marelli), Vol. 4, I. Regalia and M. Regini, Il settore delle telecommunicazioni (Sit Siemens & CGE), Vol. 5, G. Carabelli, G. Abbatecola and B. Beccalli (Falk, Dalmine e Redaelli), Vol. 6, A. Pizzorno, I. Regalia, M. Regini and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e sindacato: il ciclo 1968-72 in Italia.

12. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 12.

13. D. Pinto, "La sociologie dans l'Italie de l'après-guerre, 1950-1980", p. 246.

14. These are collected together in: Francesco Alberoni, Italia in trasformazione (Bologna, 1976).

15. Alberto Melucci, L'invenzione del presente (Bologna, 1982), p. 231.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT CAUSES A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

In the first chapter of their book Poor People's Movements, Frances Piven and Richard Cloward write about the inspiration and ideas that they gained from the social movements of the 1960's, in which they themselves participated. It is a starting point that is shared in many respects by Touraine, Barrington Moore, Shorter and Tilly and the Italian sociologists. They write that they developed their ideas on the basis of the movements' commonsense notions that power derives from force and wealth, and from the '60's discovery that

> 'protest tactics which defied political norms were not simply the recourse of troublemakers and fools, but for the poor they were the only recourse'.(1)

In other words, Piven and Cloward start from the premises of the protesters themselves, and they search for the rational kernel which they discover in popular defiance and rebellion. This does not lead them to dismiss studies of protest by sociologists, historians and others, but to call for a certain humility which means taking the views of the oppressed seriously.

The writings all belong to the period running from the late '60's to the end of the following decade. Not all the authors belong to the same generation, but they respond to the themes brought to the fore by contemporary social protest. This has already been illustrated in some detail in the case of the 'Italian School', but it was also the experience of Touraine, who keenly observed the May 1968 events in France,

and of Piven and Cloward, who were activists in the welfare rights movements in the United States. They take opposition and collective action as the privileged vantage points from which to analyse society, and they ask what it is that makes the mass of people quiescent one moment and angry the next. They question the validity of Marx's explanations of the causes of social antagonism in the context of modern capitalism, and cast doubt on whether his approach was ever adequate. They take the seemingly irrational acts of violence and disruption and uncover their inner rationality and motivation. Each of the authors tries to directly address the problem of constructing general theories and models with which to analyse social movements and make sense of what appears as chaos and disorder. So they criticise those approaches that tend to eliminate human agency and subjective perception, but at the same time try to relate social action to a more general context. Whereas in the prevalent models protest was analysed as the 'result' or 'product' of other forces, the approach adopted by these researchers focuses on the process of social mobilisation and the particularities of the demands, forms of organisations and action that it involves. Their concern is not just for the articulated statement of opposition or for the official organisations of social movements, but for the meanings hidden in the defiant gesture or word. They look for the structures underlying seemingly spontaneous revolt. Above all, these studies show a positive and intelligent appropriation of the 1960's 'discovery' that not only was rule-breaking, whether in the factory or prison, a form of

politics, but that it was often the most significant politics. It was the refusal to play the game according to the rules which lifted the veil on the hierarchical organisation of power in society, and suggested that it was neither natural nor inevitable.

This section will outline the main contributions of these selected authors to analyses of social movements and protest. Rather than taking each in turn, they will be related to the analyses of the causes and of the development of social movements.

The questions: what brings a social movement into being? what conditions make mass protest possible? why do people rebel? lie at the heart of the studies carried out in the 1960's and '70's. Historians in particular asked about the roots and origins of movements, whilst sociologists were perhaps more concerned with their actions and developments. Thus, from the group of writers under consideration here, the historians stand out in this respect. Piven and Cloward's Poor People's Movements, which is subtitled 'why they succeed, how they fail', is a set of case studies of the movements of industrial workers in the 1930's, the civil rights movement in the 1950's and '60's and of the more recent one involving welfare recipients. Shorter and Tilly's Strikes in France takes the time span 1830-1968, and Tilly's Changing Place of Collective Violence looks at France 1848-70. It is notable that they all focus on periods of social and economic transformation (industrialisation, urbanisation and the process of State-formation). Barrington Moore's Injustice also

contains a study of the German workers' movement but is more ambitious in that it aspires to construct a general theorisation of the causes of humanity's acceptance and rejection of authority and inequality. It examines recurring elements in conceptions of injustice across cultures and through time relating them to humans' 'innate needs and common cultural requirements'. It pays special attention to extreme instances of acceptance of degrading situations as well as to the psychological and sociological mechanisms through which human beings come to resist injustice.

The historians, however, share a common ground with the sociologists in that they too are confronting the paradigms of analysis provided by Marx, Weber and Durkheim in particular. They are the constant if hidden interlocutors in the field of study of social movements. Even if it is not the ideas of these thinkers that are being directly addressed, it is those of their traditions.

The dominant explanations of the relationship between collective action and industrialisation have also become the main ones for accounting for later movements. Tilly and Shorter succinctly summarise these in three groups.(2) Firstly, there is the 'breakdown' thesis of Durkheimian inspiration, according to which collective action arises from the dissolution of social bonds and controls and the resultant 'anomie'. There are variations within the functionalist model between Parsons, who makes no distinction between forms of 'deviancy', Merton, who analyses non-conforming 'collective behaviour' as structured and with a rationale, and Smelser,

who sees 'collective behaviour' as action to 'restructure the disturbed component in the social system, in order to eliminate uncertainty and confusion coming from tension'.[3] However, there is a common thread to explanations, which analyse conflict as aberrant and the product of a system's "dysfunctioning".

Secondly, there is the 'deprivation' thesis associated with the Marxist tradition, according to which collective action is a response to the processes of immiseration and proletarianisation whereby workers are progressively impoverished, and other social strata are reduced to the conditions of dependent labour. Greater and greater numbers share the same lot and, therefore, it is argued, have nothing to lose and everything to gain by rebelling against the capitalist order. A variant of this approach (which Piven and Cloward refer to as "pressure" theories)[4] is the explanation of collective action as the response to the disparity between expectations and actual economic situations. This attempts to account for those bitter that their improving situation is not better still as well as for those discontented because of their declining fortunes.

Thirdly, Tilly and Shorter outline the 'interests' argument, according to which it is communities that have not been dissolved and dismembered by socio-economic changes which resist and fight back. Working class consciousness and action grow from the very process of opposing the demands and pressures placed on workers by an emergent class of capitalists. The mobilisation creates an awareness of identity as a social force, as a class.

The 'breakdown' theories are criticised by Shorter and Tilly, among others, on the grounds that they presuppose that conflict is an abnormal and deviant state of affairs within a society. It is a supposition that they show to be consonant with the image of society that the ruling group seeks to project, and they argue that conflict cannot be adequately understood unless it is first seen to be inherent to every social order, and a vital component in the history of capitalist development. As Barrington Moore maintains, inequalities in the distribution of power and resources and in the division of labour necessarily creates frictions and conflicts, and the problem is rather to understand how these are ordered, channeled and repressed within the individual as well as between groups. Conflict is not therefore per se the sign or result of social disintegration but is integral to all societies. Often it is the breakdown and disruption of social mechanisms that dissipate resistances. Barrington Moore writes:

> 'the disruption of social organisation is probably more significant in its political consequences than straightforward material deprivation ... But disruption by itself may cause nothing more than apathy, confusion and despair ... In fact the complete destruction of existing institutions and habits of cooperation may make resistance impossible, indeed, unthinkable, by destroying the basis from which it can start.'(5)

Similarly, a general breakdown of political and social authority can generate a '<u>sauve-qui-peut</u> situation and people behave like savages towards the weak and helpless'.

The 'deprivation' and 'pressure' theories are not dismissed altogether, however, but only in so far as they tend to assume that they are adequate in themselves and that the social actions are the 'effects' of structural changes. The 'interests' approach is the one which is adopted by Shorter and Tilly in that it accepts the premise that conflict is rooted in opposing economic and social positions, but defines class in terms of agency and struggle. The key problem addressed by the selected historians and sociologists is how people become aware of their situation, and how they perceive oppression and injustice. It was an approach developed in opposition to American functionalist sociology and to Stalinist versions of Marxism, which informed the 'deprivation' and 'pressure' theories. Sudden change, a massive scale of distress, widespread and unusual dislocation tend, write Piven and Cloward, to concur in periods in which social movements are formed. Yet the 'social disorganisation and traumas of everyday life must be perceived as both wrong and subject to redress', and when this happens the 'dominant institutional arrangements, as people understand them, are self-evidently not functioning'.(6) Again, in Barrington Moore's words:

> 'where the causes of misery appear to the sufferers as due to acts of identifiable superiors, such as employers or prominent officials, in the early stages these acts are likely to appear as violations of established rights and norms'.(7)

The question of how 'men make history' or how they come to act as they do, requires, therefore, for these writers, an investigation of the contexts and structures through which they make sense of society. Their major contribution to an understanding of the causes of social movements lies in this direction.

Two approaches, which will be referred to as the 'crisis of representation' model and the 'contract' model, are of particular interest. The first has been developed by Alessandro Pizzorno through a re-working of Gramsci's ideas on crises and through his interpretation of theories of the development of citizenship. For Pizzorno, Gramsci's most original contribution was to be found in his analysis of organic crisis; a passage explaining this is worth quoting at length:

> 'Normally, an organic crisis - a crisis of hegemony of the ruling class, a conflict between representatives and the represented - arises 'either because the ruling class has failed to achieve some noteworthy political enterprise, for which it has demanded the approval of the masses or imposed its will by force (such as war), or because vast masses, particularly of farmers and petit bourgeois intellectuals, have suddenly swung from a state of political passivity to a certain activity and made demands which, in their unorganic complexity, constitute a revolution. One speaks of the 'crisis of authority', which is indeed the crisis of hegemony or the crisis of the state in its totality'. This admirable passage illustrates with precision two types of crisis of representation: because of withdrawal of support, of delegation; and because of an abrupt increase in political demand. The second type refers to that phenomenon called social mobilisation in the terminology of the sociology of development,

> and applies to the swift, more or less abrupt inflow of great masses into the political system (for example through the franchise) or into the economic-social system (for example through a broadened monetary economy or the process of rapid urbanisation).'(8)

Pizzorno goes on to look through Gramsci's eyes at how war creates opportunities for organic crises, which, he writes, are characterised by three elements:

> 'the mobilisation and induction of the masses into the system; the formation of solidarity and common causes; the creation of areas of equalisation in the face of different situations, such as warfare, working conditions and institutional processes'.(9)

But war was just the most dramatic instance of 'moments of intensively collective life', of which he listed twenty-six cases in which a population is given some 'duty at least potentially in common', with the consequent possibility of verifying 'an action and mode of unitarian and collective character'. Thus, Gramsci looked at elections not for their institutional functions, but as moments of mobilisation; for example, he writes of the 1913 general election in Italy as a time when 'there was a widespread, mystical conviction that everything would change after voting'.

The appropriation of Gramsci's method in the 'Italian School's' studies of social movements has been significant in offering a path out of the impasse represented by the functionalist and economistic alternatives. His concepts of the crisis of representation, of social mobilisation, and of ideology have informed the studies of workers' struggles carried out in the 1970's, helping to break with the narrow definitions of political institutions. The notion of class

interests is re-worked in terms of collective identities that are formed in conflict. The causes of social movements are found in the failure of the representatives (whether they be trade union organisations, political parties or parliamentary institutions) to interpret, channel, mediate and satisfy or contain the demands of the represented. That failure tends especially to occur with the emergence of a new social actor. The 'organic crisis' potentially involves not only the institutions but the whole gamut of relations between the social classes, whilst it centres on the key moment of rupture between representatives and represented. Charles Tilly outlines this conception of political life in a study of collective violence:

> 'each society has a characteristic irreducible minimum level of collective violence, but collective violence becomes particularly widespread when numerous groups are acquiring or losing political identities. These acquisitions and losses of political identity occur both when groups within society are changing with respect to the criteria of membership laid down by the existing members of the polity and when the relevant polity itself is changing through an increase or decrease in the scale of political life.'(10)

As will be seen in a later section on the development of social movements, this approach enables explanations of the forms taken by protest of which structuralist models are not capable.

The 'contract' model of explanation of the causes of social protest is similar to that outlined above. It shares a concern with the moment of 'organic crisis' in the relations of domination and in the rules and norms governing those relations. Barrington Moore, the main exponent of this approach taken here, puts similar stress on the specificity

of the political and the need to study the particularity and surprisingness of moments of rebellion. He criticises the tendency to

> 'overemphasise the long-run social trends ... and to underestimate the importance of control over the instruments of violence and the significance of decisions taken by political leaders'.(11)

In this sense he is continuing the critique of what he understands as Marx's tendency to explain historical change in terms of economic laws but his is not a simple and casual dismissal.

Injustice is a sort of dialogue with Marxism in that it seeks to discover the long term characteristics of 'moral outrage' and its recurrent causes. Thus, the 'organic crisis', or what he refers to as the 'crisis of legitimacy' is not explicable without a history of protest and discontent. Whilst the inequalities in the division of labour, and in the distribution of resources and of authority are shown to not automatically provoke outrage (although they do generate a certain level of frustration since humans resent hunger, the cold, contact with excrement and so on), Barrington Moore picks out general tendencies in what is regarded as unjust about these aspects of social organisation. The notion of exploitation is put on one side because 'it is always necessary to find out how people themselves judge their situation'.(12) He writes that injustice in relation to the division of labour is felt especially when limits on access to and use of the means of production are not 'enough'

to allow a 'decent' role in society; anger is not simply over material interests but over a 'way of life under attack'. Anger and sanctions are also regularly directed at the 'idler'. Similarly, the idea of injustice in the distribution of the product is based on having 'enough', but distributive justice is a 'curious mixture of equality within inequality', which entails a rough conception of the proportionate relationship between what people invest in a task and the benefit they ought to derive from it with reference to the same group.

What is defined as 'enough' and as the 'just measure' is, of course, the nub of the question. Barrington Moore agrees with Marx that 'the upper strata to a great extent define what is socially necessary - only when the obsolete character of the dominant group becomes blatantly obvious through failure in competition with another society or culture is it liable to lose its right to appropriate the surplus from the underlying population'.(13) However, he rejects explanations based on the couplet 'force and fraud'. The crucial concept that overcomes their unilateral and deterministic character is that of 'social contract', an analytic term borrowed from EP Thompson's work, and elaborated by Barrington Moore. The 'social contract' is not a formal, legal arrangement, but 'a continuous probing on the part of rulers and subjects to find out what they can get away with, to test and discover the limits of obedience and disobedience ... The more stable a society, the narrower the range within which this takes place'.(14) This contract

relation applies, Barrington Moore argues, to how the division of labour is organised and the product distributed in all societies, not only the capitalist ones which first gave rise to contract theories in the 17th century.

However, the idea of the social contract has primarily been related to the problem of authority. It posits mutual sets of obligations between rulers and ruled. The ruler is expected to provide protection from foreign powers, to maintain law and order and settle disputes, and to ensure subjects a measure of material security. Barrington Moore stresses that due note should be taken of a widespread human tendency to interpret the clauses of the implicit social contract for the ruler's benefit, and that those at the bottom of the social pyramid often see social order as a good thing in itself because of the precariousness in their lives. Yet certain violations of the contract resulting from a failure to fulfill obligations are liable to arouse the anger of subjects.

The idea of injustice and moral outrage are, therefore, according to Barrington Moore, constant features of human society, and take shape in relation to the infringement of contracts which are in some degree based on reciprocity rather than force or fraud. This approach is not unlike Gramsci's when he writes of the hegemony of a social group coming from its capacity to elicit 'spontaneously given' consent, which involves conflict as well as negotiation and obedience[15]; in Barrington Moore's words: 'where reciprocity exists it is not the result of innate tendencies, but has to be created and continually recreated'.[16] Protest, therefore, does not

come from nowhere, although this might seem to be the case. Moreover, the moral outrage that drives revolt and the early moments of social movements is necessarily implicated to some degree in the morality based on the reciprocity of the contract.

Barrington Moore's particular contribution to understanding crises of authority or legitimacy comes from his attention to the complexities of perceptions of injustice and of responses to it. It is interesting that he deliberately chooses terms such as 'injustice', 'moral outrage' and 'anger', which index feelings and their ambiguities in preference over terms such as 'exploitation', 'ideology' and 'consciousness'. However, Barrington Moore does not use these terms to avoid theorisation but to explore the structuring of feelings as a process which he sees as fundamental to human behaviour. Ideologies of protest are shown to be crucial (crises of legitimacy necessarily involve an intellectual challenge to the existing order), but only in so far as they connect up with less easily defined "moral outrage".

The crisis of legitimacy is defined by three interconnected processes - firstly, the undermining of the justifications of the dominant group; secondly, the emergence of alternative standards; and, thirdly, the identification of friends and foes.

The first cause of crisis comes from a failure to abide by an essential 'clause' in the contract, but a response may be limited to petitions for redress; unless, that is, the idea of the inevitability of the existing order is undermined and

'nimbus of authority' lent by time is dispelled. Barrington Moore cites a passage of De Tocqueville as an exemplary analysis of this process:

> 'Only a great genius could save the ruler who tries to relieve his subjects after a long oppression. The evil suffered patiently as inevitable seems unendurable as soon as one conceives the idea of escaping from it. All the abuses that have been removed seem only to delineate the better those that remain and to make one's feelings more bitter. The evil, it is true, has become less, but one's sensibilities are more acute.'(17)

In such circumstances, writes Barrington Moore, the idea of inevitability can lead to a discovery of causal relationships which serves to undermine a regime.

The second component of the crisis - the formation of alternative standards - is given great emphasis in Injustice. Attention centres especially on the role of 'outside agitators' in producing "standards of condemnation". Barrington Moore claims that:

> 'social critics are inclined to minimise their role for fear of carrying water to the mills of conservatism and reaction' ... [despite the fact that] 'since the time of the Apostles no social movement has been without its army of preachers and militants ... It is the activist minority that promotes and promulgates new standards of condemnation ... Very frequently they are outsiders ... they do the hard work of undermining the old sense of inevitability. They are also the travelling salesmen of the new inevitability.'(18)

The importance attributed to the 'outside agitator' derives,

in Barrington Moore's analysis, from the very obstacles to revolt, which are all the more powerful for being internal. Even when people have the possibility of making comparisons, as in the case of conquest or slavery when the new situation is judged against the old, 'it is easy to see that it is difficult not to feel inferior when one is inferior and all the social pressures work to remind one of it'.(19) Thus Sambo and the slave that cuts the master's throat coexist (often in the same person). Moral autonomy, according to Barrington Moore, requires exceptional qualities, and is best investigated through biography. It involves three different levels: resistance to oppressive or destructive commands; intellectual recognition of their oppressiveness; and finally the moral inventiveness of a Jesus or Martin Luther King.

However, the other authors on social movements attach much less importance to the 'outside agitator'. Piven and Cloward write that 'organisers' are most effective in social movements when they act as 'detonators'. They cite the example of the early civil rights and welfare movements when students, churchmen and anti-poverty workers sought to 'energise a broad, loosely coordinated movement ... and to arouse hundreds of thousands of poor people to build welfare rolls and not organisational rolls'.(20) Unfortunately what is meant by 'energising' and 'arousing' remains largely unexplored; only a footnote on the participation of clergymen in welfare struggles points to questions of moral and ideological leadership:

> 'The participation of clergymen was an important source of reassurance to welfare recipients. It helped them to deal with their sense of shame by giving them the feeling that what they were demanding - dependency with dignity - found some justification in moral and religious principles.'(21)

Unfortunately, for the most part Piven and Cloward focus on the practical side of 'organising', which is divorced from more general cultural issues.

Barrington Moore's notion of the 'outside agitator' is fruitful in this sense, but it tends to assume an apostolic figure who guides and enlightens from above. It therefore marginalises the way in which 'moral outrage' is generated from within subordinate groups from below. Furthermore, it makes the complex relationship of the oppressed to the intellectuals one-sided. Jacques Rancière offers a useful alternative perspective.

Rancière, in his book La Nuit des Prolétaires, reveals a 'thorough-going reciprocity in which workers and intellectuals figure in each other's imaginations in endless circularity'. He delves into the Paris of the 1830's and '40's when these groups mixed to discuss politics.

> 'Proletarians needed to grasp the secret of others in order to define the meaning of their own existence ... They did not lack an understanding of exploitation; what they required was an understanding of themselves as beings destined for something other than exploitation: an insight which they could only attain through the secret of others - of middle class intellectuals.'

It was, as Rancière writes,

> 'a question of identity, of image, of the relationship of Self and Other, both posing and concealing the problem of either maintaining or crossing the gulf between those whose business was thought and those who worked with their hands.'(22)

The relationship between the social groups was not a simple one of leaders and led. The bourgeois 'apostles' created or deepened cracks in notions of life constrained by the daily round of work and opened up new vistas. But, Rancière observes, the problems begin when the preachers 'want to turn those twists and turns into the true, straight road that leads to the dawn of Labour'. The 'Other' represents a life-style which touches off dreams of utopias, but its dreams are not the same as those of the intellectuals who then strive to bring them into line with their schemas.

Rancière's considerations are especially interesting because they do not just concern full-blown philosophies but explore social identities which were conceived in aesthetic terms. He examines the milieu of the café and small debating society, not philosophies in the abstract. (In fact, he warns against the way in which intellectuals tend to reconstruct history in their own image.) What he is concerned to show is that the utopian impulse, the desire to live in a completely different way and to remake an identity, is an essential feature of any movement of emancipation. It transcends the harsh limits imposed by the daily grind and defies explanations cast in terms of 'interests'. The workers studied by Rancière do not want to fulfil their

identities as 'workers' but to lead a life more like that of the middle class poets, painters and musicians of their acquaintance. The fact that their aspirations were dashed does not, however, mean that they were vain. What is more important to note, says Rancière, is the impulse to defy a destiny and to reject an order of things 'even in the face of the ultimate extinction of Utopia'.

Rancière usefully focuses on the dreams and fantasies that feed revolt and give it meaning, but to understand how they connect up with and express the sentiments of broad masses of people it is necessary to put them in context. It is only in certain moments that there is what Barrington Moore calls the 'conquest of the illusion of inevitability'. It is then that subordinate groups not only lose faith in 'authority', but they come to believe that the world can be changed through their actions. These are rare moments which are characterised by concurrent and unusual dislocation when the social traumas of everyday life are perceived as 'both wrong and subject to redress' (Piven and Cloward). How that perception is arrived at is a complex process which is by no means an automatic response to hardship and suffering. It is perhaps best thought in terms of the social contract between rulers and ruled outlined by Barrington Moore; the most common forms of popular criticisms of authority "are to the effect that it has failed to live up to its obligations ... the more subversive forms ask whether specific functions need to be

performed at all".[23] But the nature of the criticism is seen in the development of the social movements. It is not fixed in advance but changes with the forms and scale of protest. Through social mobilisation, more than anything else, groups can have a sense of their own power. In these circumstances utopian ideas and aspirations are not espoused only by tiny minorities, but enter into wider circulation. Then, the most isolated, individual gesture of defiance can symbolise the desire for a new order of things.

FOOTNOTES: PART 1

Chapter 2

1. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements (New York, 1977), p. 3.

2. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France: 1830-1968 (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 4-11.

3. These distinctions are pointed out by Alberto Melucci, Movimenti di Rivolta, pp. 5-9.

4. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp. 8-9.

5. Barrington Moore Jr., Injustice (London, 1978), p. 470.

6. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 10.

7. Barrington Moore, Injustice, p. 471.

8. Alessandro Pizzorno, 'On Gramsci's Method', First Italo-Hungarian Conference of Sociology (1967), pp. 235-6.

9. Ibid., p. 236.

10. Charles Tilly, "The Changing Place of Collective Violence", in M. Richter, Essays in Theory and History (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 144.

11. Barrington Moore, Injustice, p. 81.

12. Ibid., p. 257. Barrington Moore's general observations are found in parts I and III of Injustice whilst part II is an analysis of the German workers' movement which is examined as a historical case.

13. Ibid., p. 43.

14. Ibid., p. 22.

15. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks (London, 1971), pp. 55-8.

16. Barrington Moore, Injustice, p. 506.

17. Ibid., p. 494.

18. Ibid., pp. 472-3.

19. Ibid., p. 464.

20. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp. 278-285.

21. Ibid., p. 321.

22. Jacques Rancière, 'Preface to 'Proletarian Nights'', Radical Philosophy (Summer, 1982), pp. 10-11. There is also a useful introduction by Jonathan Rée; see also J. Rancière, "Le prolétaire et son double ou Le Philosophe inconnu", in Revoltes Logiques, (13), pp. 4-12.

23. Barrington Moore, Injustice, p. 510.

CHAPTER 3: HOW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS DEVELOP

The development of social movements is a key concern for the historians and sociologists being considered here. Some of the answers to why movements succeed or fail are sought in the causes of the social movements, and in the 'organic crisis' which, as Pizzorno writes, can 'lead to revolution but can also lead to reaction, or can simply play itself out leaving those in power still holding the reins'.(1) However, these authors are united by a desire to avoid prejudgements which are based in deterministic arguments. They are attentive to the range of possibilities open to the protagonists, and assess their successes and failures accordingly. This means close analysis of the movements' inner workings, and subjectivity. Melucci, for example, warns against the Marxist tradition's tendency to:

> 'concentrate on the conditions of revolution, starting from the contradictions of the capitalist system, and to largely ignore the processes of the formation of collective action, the network of relations that constitute the inner dimensions of a movement, and more generally the passage from elementary forms of revolt to class organisation'.(2)

In this section there will be an outline of the contributions of the 'Italian School' and of Piven and Cloward to the analysis of these inner dynamics of social movements. This will then be followed by an account of Alain Touraine's seminal work in the field.

The 'Italian School' is of particular interest because of its critical appropriation of Weberian theories of organisation and leadership, and its application of concepts used in the study of the development of citizenship in its analyses of social movements. Altogether the School has combined a number of approaches to constitute an impressive body of theory and some remarkable empirical studies. Piven and Cloward's contribution is weaker in its analyses of the relationship of the movements to their organisational forms, but they make very perceptive observations on the interaction of movements and institutional contexts. Finally, Touraine's writings on social movements deserve attention because of his attempt to systematically criticise the models of social action based on the industrial working class (Marx above all is the target of his critiques), and because he constructs an alternative model of 'post industrial' society. Touraine derives the second from his identification of the new forms of social conflict and movement which emerged in the 1960's and '70's.

The 'Italian School' Account

For the 'Italian School', the starting point for analysis of a social movement is the 'organic crisis', which involves not only the failure of the institutions to mediate demands but social mobilisation. This is defined by Melucci as:

> 'the process whereby the collective actor gathers together and directs its resources for the pursuit of a shared objective, against the resistances of groups with an interest in the maintenance of the existing system'.(3)

On the basis of the relationships between the three vital ingredients of social conflict - actor, stakes and antagonist - Melucci distinguishes social movements from other forms of collective action. Furthermore, he distinguishes between types of movement.(4) Unlike fashion or panic behaviour 'where each individual, even though acting in the same way as others, acts only in his own interests', in the social movement they are aware of 'participating in a new type of solidarity'. Unlike 'conflictual action', by which he refers to 'conflict within the boundaries of the system in consideration ... and the opposition of groups within normatively regulated associations for the control of authority,' social movements necessarily go beyond the existing boundaries. At the same time, they differ from 'deviancy', which breaks rules but without identifying the adversary or the stakes over which to fight. However, Melucci writes, social movements differ and can be classified by their dominant aspects. Thus, he identifies the 'demand movement' ('movimento rivendicativo') as struggles for a 'redistribution of resources and a restructuring of roles' which take place within the terms laid down in the political system; the 'political movement' works to 'transform the channels of political participation and shift the balance of power in the decision-making processes'; the 'class movement' is

collective action against an adversary for the appropriation and control over the objectives and the means of social production'.

Melucci's typology is not of great interest in itself. It reproduces the categories of 'economic and political', and 'reformist and revolutionary', with which to differentiate movements - categories that are central to a Marxist and Leninist political analysis. Melucci himself uses them as raw materials to be transformed rather than as an orthodoxy to be respected. He writes:

> 'no collective action speaks an unequivocal language. An analytic approach to social movements entails the deconstruction of the object of study into different levels according to the system of social relations involved and the consequent orientation of that action'.(5)

Thus, the relationship of movements to institutions and to their organisations needs to be analysed as a specific process. In Touraine's words:

> 'the social movement is never separated from protest and pressure, from crisis and rupture, all of which give rise to different types of struggles'.(6)

For example, how and why movements start in a radical direction only to be accommodated within the dominant structures presents itself as a mystery to be solved.

Social movements, according to the analyses of the 'Italian School', tend to have phases that constitute a cycle. This is most evident in the writings of Francesco Alberoni,

whose approach is closest to Weber's.(7) He outlines three basic stages of development: firstly, there is the 'condition of birth' or formation of a movement, when people try to construct a way of living that is totally different from the established and everyday. It is the moment of the 'exploration of the frontiers of the possible'. Secondly, there is the process whereby this is given organisational shape and becomes a concrete historical project. Finally, this movement is constrained, after a period of conflict, to adapt itself to 'reality' and compromise with historical forces. It thereby becomes an institution, or alternatively is defeated on the field of battle. Movement and institution for Alberoni constitute two states of being between which human life moves; the concepts can be applied to love and marriage or movements of national liberation and nation states. The Catholic Church is referred to as a classic instance of an institution that gives rise to 'movementist' schisms that go through the phases of development. The religious model provided a paradigm; the 'statu nascente' at the beginning of social movements is characterised as a 'fundamental experience' shared by Christian and Marxist traditions alike. Alberoni, in particular, makes it the basis for the construction of "ideal types".

However, the Weberian model is critically appropriated by the 'Italian School'. Melucci, for example, rejects the identification of organisation and institutionalisation.(8)

Organisation and leadership are necessary for a movement to enable it to counteract internal centrifugal forces and the initiatives of the adversary, but that does not automatically entail bureaucratisation; models developed from the study of dominant organisations cannot be simply applied to oppositional forces, which have to compete and to relate directly to a mass of people. History is littered with the tragic deaths of movements as well as with cases of institutionalisation. From Weber is taken up not the 'inevitable logic' of organisation, but attention to the various 'logics' that are specific to organisations (e.g. a trade union's orientation to increasing membership), which are in turn related to external conditions (e.g. the labour market). Melucci writes that Weber's analyses are especially useful in that he draws attention to the way organisations 'have a life of their own'; they have to be studied in terms of internal mechanisms for the allocation of resources and roles governed by norms and decision-making structures.

From Weber the Italian School derives its distinction between 'expressive' and 'instrumental' action, which respectively correspond to the dominant modes of behaviour of social movements and of the organisations which attempt to direct their development. These terms are used in conjunction with the concept of 'collective identity', which comes from theorisations of the development of citizenship. The struggles of a social group to establish its identity and to win recognition for itself within the polity tend to

be bitter and hard fought out. 'Expressive' action predominates. When a group has been brought into the polity then its actions will tend to conform to the rules and will be more 'instrumental'. Pizzorno explains the terms of the interpretative model which was developed to analyse the social conflict in Italy:

> 'When a mass of individuals, who belong to an occupational group, or class fraction, or who have common objective interests, are excluded from the system of representation but find themselves in favourable circumstances or mobilisation ... the conflict which ensues in their struggle for recognition tends to be more intense than over normal demands ... For example, conflicts are often ends in themselves (and sometimes no specific demands are made); they do not rely on negotiation because the true objective is the constitution of a new identity. This identity is not in itself negotiable, but forms the premise of every negotiation. All forms of behaviour designed to increase interpersonal communication (such as the production of symbols recognisable by the group or by its allies or enemies) function to form the collective identity'.(9)

Pizzorno goes on to analyse the cycles of social movements according to whether "expressive" or "instrumental" behaviour prevails. When the struggle for recognition is at its height behaviour can be categorised as 'expressive'; the demands are unmeetable, actions break with procedure and even legality and the protagonists create their own direct and informal representatives. When the collective subject is formally recognised, then conflict becomes regulated and demands are channeled and open to negotiation. Instrumental behaviour prevails.

The fruitfulness of the 'Italian School's' approach is testified by the strengths of their empirical case studies when applied to objects as different as the workers' movement and youth protest. The rejection of concepts drawn from Marxism such as class consciousness and the preference for intermediary terms such as 'collective identity' and 'expressive' and 'instrumental' action have major consequences. Firstly, it breaks with the language of the movements themselves and the a priori identification of their stated objectives and their raisons d'être. Instead these are related to the formation of 'collective identities', which are not assumed to reflect class position. Secondly, the approach tries to find a way of thinking about the relationship of movements and institutions which recognises their specific characteristics, whilst examining their interaction as a process. This makes it possible to escape from the simple binary oppositions (e.g. spontaneity/organisation, revolt/cooption or revolt/repression) which have been common currency in studies of movements. The approach also has important implications for evaluating how movements develop and fulfil their goals according to the responsiveness of the institutions. A conclusion arrived at by the 'Italian School' is that social movements can only grow if they manage to get their demands at least partially met, and if they find interlocutors who stand between them and the dominant institutions. In this perspective, it becomes clear that a movement cannot necessarily be easily classified as 'reformist' or 'revolutionary', and that it is impossible to explain a

movement's development without giving a key place to the structures of representation in a society, in moments of 'organic crisis' and of political stabilisation.

Piven and Cloward's Account

Piven and Cloward's analyses of 'poor peoples' movements' led them to construct general models that concord in many respects with those of the 'Italian School'.(10) Protest as well as quiescence is explained in relation to institutional context; 'collective defiance', the equivalent of 'expressive action', is taken to be the defining mode of behaviour of social movements, which develop according to logics that have to be separated from those organisations. The convergence of approaches is especially at the micro level of relating action to 'concrete settings', in which 'people experience deprivation and oppression'. Factory workers' protest is explained in the context of production-line speeds and abusive foreman, and not as responses to 'monopoly capitalism' in the abstract. It is the factory that 'aggregates and disperses', and which 'determines the strategic opportunities for defiance'. The Milan studies of struggles in the factories, 1968-72, dwell carefully on these conditions. However, the two approaches differ in their analysis of the relationship of movements to organisation, and to State institutions.

Piven and Cloward tend to play down the role of

organisation in the movements. It is treated as a by-product rather than as a part of the process whereby movements take shape. Movements are shown to owe more to the interventions of detonator-style agitators and to the self-activity of the mass of people. Organisers figure largely in their account as intermediaries between the movements and the institutions. By stressing the need to build organisational membership and resources, they channel a movement's energies into activities which conform to normal modes of political action. Thereby, organisers disarm movements by depriving them of their most significant resource, namely, the power to disrupt. In analysing the particular forms of protest, Piven and Cloward point to interaction between the movement and the dominant institutions rather than to the relationship between the movement and its so-called representatives.

Piven and Cloward write:

> 'the demands of the protestors, at least for the periods we examine, are shaped as much by their interaction with élites as by structural factors (or contradictions) which produced the movements'.(11)

For example, presidential statements on the rights of black people are seen as vital to the civil rights movement. To explain this it is necessary to deal with the 'vitality of a political culture in terms of features such as its rituals, celebrations and rewards'; only then can one understand how political discontent is shaped by the system against which it is directed, and how, especially in the early stages of

mobilisation, protest appears through conventional channels such as the ballot-box.

For Piven and Cloward, a protest movement's capacity to wrest concessions from the 'rulers' depends very much on the possibilities of the moment; only in exceptional circumstances are they there to be grasped. In such times, the movements, by definition, resort to means that are extra-institutional, whilst the 'rulers' aim to bring or force them into the existing political framework. Whereas the 'Italian School', using the 'development of citizenship' model, tends to focus on the process whereby new 'collective identities' are recognised within the polity, Piven and Cloward analyse recognition as a weapon of rule in the armoury of the ruling group. They see the concession of rights as more significant than material concessions in so far as they are 'designed to reintegrate the movement into normal political channels'[12]; they write that by granting the right to unionise or vote,

> 'to all appearances, the government simply acted to redress felt grievances ... but in each case élites responded to discontent by proposing reforms with which they had experience, and which consisted mainly in extending established procedures to new groups or to new institutional areas'.

Thus, if workers had demanded nationalisation, they would still have got no more than the right to unionise. However, this concession, they insist, usually is part of an articulated strategy which includes repression as well as reforms (when, that is, the social movement is not being ignored or immediately repressed).

Firstly, political leaders, sensitive to the electoral barometer of discontent, attempt to coopt leaders of the movement with the offer of jobs and other benefits. Secondly, government measures tend to undermine wider support for protest movements, neutralising sections of favourable opinion and stimulating a backlash. Thirdly, some of those measures are liable to be withdrawn, whilst others, especially those found to be 'compatible or not incompatible' with the interests of more powerful groups remain. (The latter, write Piven and Cloward, have already been made ready to be conceded by historical circumstances.) By this point, the stage has been set for moves to isolate and, if necessary, repress the activists. Piven and Cloward write that with 'poor people's' movements, 'even when protesters succeed in forcing the government to respond, they do not dictate the contents of those responses'.(13) Above all, the reason for the demise of the movements, in their analysis, lies not within them, but in the 'political context which nourished them in the first place'. Government responses transform the political climate which made protest possible in the first place:

> 'the concessions, the efforts to 'bring them into the system, and in particular the measures aimed at potential supporters, all work to create a powerful image of a benevolent and responsive government that answers grievances and solves problems.'(14)

They conclude from their findings that movements get results for poor people to the extent that they disrupt the normal

functioning of the system, and not in relation to their organisational strength.

Alain Touraine and New Social Movements

Alain Touraine's writings on social movements have been of decisive importance for the development not only of a field but of sociology as a discipline. Touraine focuses on social movements because of the perspective that they afford on how society as a whole is organised. Movement, conflict and social action are analysed to highlight human agency and to oppose the static and self-regulating model of the functionalists and structuralists. Richard Sennett contrasts his approach to that of Talcott Parsons:

> 'For Touraine structure is a property of activity. People do not act in a social structure; the structure of society is the structure of how a group moves; it has an identity only by virtue of its movement.'

At the same time, Touraine seeks:

> 'to rescue this theory of structure-as-structuration from ending up as pure empiricism ... He may be said to be seeking a choreography of conflict as a means of 'gluing' social life together'.(15)

Touraine's work, in other words, attempts to explain conflict without reducing it to being the 'effect' or 'result' of social or economic structures, and this puts him at odds with both Marxists and Durkheimians. But it is particularly Marxism which is the object of his critiques. His work can be seen

as a continuous engagement with this tradition, and a refutation of its central thesis, namely that the industrial working class is the revolutionary subject and the leading protagonist of social change because of the determinacy of economic contradictions.

This thesis is criticised by Touraine in his early major writings. His studies of working class composition and consciousness in the workplace, especially The Evolution of Work at Renault (1955) and Workers' Consciousness (1965), claimed that there was little evidence to support the Marxist thesis and a lot which contradicted it. The emergence of the semi-skilled factory worker and the decline of skill differentiation did not create objective conditions which favoured revolutionary class consciousness. If anything, the disappearance of the skilled worker, who had been the leader of movements for workers' control in the past, signalled a decline in revolutionary consciousness. The line-worker in the modern factory looked for changes in society outside the workplace, but only for changes which guaranteed security of employment, a regular wage and state welfare provision. This worker's subordination and instrumental attitude to work underpinned a reformist willingness to delegate power to the State, rather than a desire for direct control. The only group of workers who seemed to demand power and control over their work conditions were the technicians and technically trained workers; they were referred to in Serge Mallet's celebrated term as the 'new working class'.(16) It was thought by Touraine and others that the inconsistences between their

skill and education, their bargaining power and their high status and their disproportionately limited role in decision-making made them the centre of a new field of conflict. Whilst the older industrial workers demanded a greater share of the product, this group of workers were thought to have the potential to call in question the power structure and priorities of the production process itself.

Touraine's preoccupation with questions of power and control rather than with ownership and the determinacy of economic position can, therefore, be traced back to these earlier writings. The events of May '68 confirmed some of his observations. In his May Movement (1968), Post Industrial Society (1969) and Self Production of Society (1973) Touraine reiterates that the industrial working class is 'no longer the privileged historical agent'; the company is no longer at the centre of the economic system, and industrial conflicts are 'concerned more with decision-making than with power'. The 'new working class' thesis had been validated;

> 'the general principle of our analysis ... that the formation of social classes and class action has a better chance in the social and economic groups where the contradictions between organisational interests and personal autonomy is most directly manifested'.(17)

John Low-Beer writes that the role of the new working class is central to Touraine's theory, and that, like Mallet,he draws on the analogy between skilled workers and the new working class. Both groups, writes Touraine, 'in their opposition to those who hold power, use the instruments of

production which their opponents claim to control'.(18)

However, Touraine's analysis shifts from dealing with the workplace, which had been conceived as the crucial site of conflict, to examine the complex of power relations in society as a whole. In May Movement he writes that students could not be considered a class in the classic sense, but that that was not important since they 'are representative of all those who suffer more from social integration and cultural manipulation than from economic exploitation and material misery'.(19) In what Touraine calls 'post industrial society' conflicts are not principally between labour and capital within the centres of production, but between the technocratic centres of economic and political power, interested above all in economic growth, and those manipulated into a 'dependent participation':

> 'The principal opposition between the two great classes or groups of classes does not result from the fact that one possesses wealth or property and the other does not. It comes about because the dominant classes dispose of knowledge and control information ... The one who controls exerts influence on the systems of social relations in the name of their needs; the one who is controlled constantly affirms his existence ... as an autonomous unit whose personality does not coincide with any of his roles. This is the reason - in our eyes justified - why the idea of alienation is so widespread ... What dominates our type of society is not the internal contradictions of the various social systems but the contradictions between the needs of these social systems and the needs of individuals .....
>
> In modern societies, a class movement manifests itself by direct political struggle and by the rejection of alienation: by revolt against a system of integration and manipulation. What is essential is the

> greater emphasis on political and cultural, rather than economic, action. This is the great difference from the labor movement, formed in opposition to liberal capitalism. Such movements are scarcely beginning, but they always talk about power rather than about salaries, employment, or property ... The principal objection of modern social movements is more the control of change than the struggle against profit.'(20)

The city is the crucial place where ways of life and political consciousness are formed, not the workplace. The relationship between economic and political decision-making has changed, Touraine observes, so that 'politics no longer goes along with economic organisation, it precedes and governs it'. Investment is not undertaken by a section of society but by society as a whole. In turn, conflicts are not limited to workers, but involve workers and other groups as inhabitants, consumers and parents. The interdependency and integration of extra-production areas as factors of production enlarges the areas of conflicts. In Low-Beer's words, Touraine has 'substituted 'relationship to the means of decision and control' for 'relationship to the means of production', and the key struggles in society are to do with power rather than ownership.(21)

In an article published in 1975 entitled 'New Social Movements', Touraine follows through the line of analysis begun with the May Movement. He finds increasing evidence to support his thesis that the most significant social conflicts are not those which are currently dominant, but those which are symptomatic of the emergent 'post industrial' society. Hence, it is not the semi-skilled workers' struggles of older industries, but the new conflicts brought about by the women's

movement, youth protest and black people's struggles that confront the key issues of how society is organised. These concern the exercise of power over the whole of society. The exploitation of natural resources and human labour is no longer the central site of conflict. What matters is the 'control of technical-human systems which transmit and transform information' and their use as 'instruments of social integration'. The new conflicts appear throughout society. The conceptions of society in terms of levels and instances (political, ideological and economic), and the distinction between productive and unproductive sectors have lost their usefulness. The new forms through which power is exercised make other distinctions more pertinent; power at the centre creates the categories of 'marginality' and 'minority', which in turn become the terms of resistance and opposition within society.

Touraine uses the examples of anti-psychiatry and prison revolt to illustrate his argument that the new social conflicts are shaped in and against the post industrial forms of domination. He writes:

> 'We see how anti-psychiatry questions the definitions of madness as deviancy, and how certain interpretations reach the point of identifying madness with desire and libido that have been repressed and fragmented by the organisation of society ... It is even more interesting to see the appearance of conflict where previously there was only the repression of deviancy. The prison revolts ... go beyond making demands limited to the prison situation. The notion of social order which is imposed throughout society is simultaneously revealed to be directly linked to the dominant ideology ... Now

> conflict appears in all parts of society and conflict and non-conformity converge.'(22)

Touraine observes that the usual image of social conflict as involving two social classes is replaced by the image of conflict between the central apparatuses of control, supported by a 'service class', and the excluded, marginalised, under-privileged minorities. He lists youth, women (who have minority status) and intellectuals as typical groups who oppose the central power. Their 'ghettoes', however, are both communities from which opposition is organised and places to which to retreat.

For Touraine, the struggles against domination in post industrial societies are primarily defensive and fragmented. Social groups, especially primary groups constituted by gender and race, fight to defend their identities from the incursions of the central power. They struggle above all to achieve autonomy and self-management ('autogestion') as collectivities, which become a means and an end of action. The new social conflicts decisively break with the previous models of political action. Firstly, the new movements are too global to be the 'raw materials' which parties then transform in their own image. Touraine writes:

> 'In the face of apparatuses that control ever more aspects of social life, the democracy expressed by opposition forces can only be global and cultural in the sense implied by the notion of cultural revolution. Conflict is thereby introduced and identifiable in all fields of social life'.(23)

Secondly, the opposition movements are fragmentary since they

reflect particular group desires for autonomy and self-management so that, in Touraine's words, 'there is no unifying principle capable of making them into a potential controller of society. They are only unified by their opposition to domination'. Touraine concludes that parties (in France these will be the parties of the Left) and movements are necessarily interdependent because of the need for a unity of political action that cannot emerge from the social struggles, but that the relationship between the two has changed. Now, the parties have to base their strategies in the movements, which are no longer subordinate but remain independent. The opposition movements typical of post industrial society, Touraine writes, dispense with the 'illusion of the end of history and the establishment of a natural harmony' in a future society. They herald a politics which is about the 'control of society's power to act on itself', and which no longer relies on Marxism's meta-social ideas of linear evolution and teleological development.

Some Questions

In what follows the approaches to the analysis of protest and movements that have been discussed so far will be used to examine events in Italy for the period from the late 1960's to the end of the '70's. In the process, the aim is to address some general questions about the significance of social movements in contemporary societies. Some of these can be briefly summarised as follows:

consider their implications for the changing shape of politics. Anyone expecting a list of requisite solutions will be disappointed. However, much of the argument of the thesis centres on the importance of questioning and doubting. Protest itself springs from the questions that social groups and individuals begin to ask of their situation. If it can be shown in the case studies that the right questions are being asked of the social movements, then this will already make the thesis worthwhile.

FOOTNOTES: PART 1

Chapter 3

1. Alessandro Pizzorno, 'On Gramsci's Method', p. 235.

2. Alberto Melucci (Ed.), Movimenti di Rivolta, p. 4.

3. Alberto Melucci, Sistema politico partiti e movimenti sociali (Milan, 1979), p. 102.

4. Ibid., pp. 96-9.

5. A. Melucci, "Dieci ipotesi per l'analisi dei nuovi movimenti" in Quaderni Piacentini, 65-66 (February, 1978), p. 4.

6. Alain Touraine, The Voice and the Eye - An Analysis of Social Movements (Cambridge, 1981), p. 85.

7. See Francesco Alberoni, Movimento e Istituzione (Bologna, 1977).

8. Alberto Melucci, Sistema politico, p. 121.

9. Alessandro Pizzorno, "Le due logiche dell'azione di classe", in A. Pizzorno, Lotte operaie e sindacato Vol. 6, p. 13.

10. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements, Chapter 1.

11. Ibid., p. 17.

12. Ibid., pp. 32-3.

13. Ibid., p. 32.

14. Ibid., p. 33.

15. Richard Sennett, Foreword in A. Touraine, The Voice and the Eye, p. X.

16. Serge Mallet, La nouvelle classe ouvrière (Paris, 1963).

17. Alain Touraine, Post Industrial Society (New York, 1971), p. 17.

18. Ibid., p. 66 quoted in John Low-Beer, Protest and Participation - The new working class in Italy (Cambridge, 1978), p. 239.

19. Alain Touraine, May Movement (New York, 1971), p. 355.

20. Alain Touraine, Post Industrial Society, p. 61, pp. 73-4 quoted by John Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, p. 238.

21. John Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, p. 239.

22. Alain Touraine, "I nuovi conflitti sociali", in A. Melucci (Ed.), Movimenti di Rivolta, pp. 161-2.

23. Ibid., p. 165.

PART 2

ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS OF 1968-9

In 1968-9 Italy experienced an 'organic crisis', in which there was a massive withdrawal of support for the structures of representation, and an abrupt increase in political demands. The crisis of 1968-9 arose within specific institutional contexts, especially in the universities and schools, and in the factories, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, but to understand its dimensions it is necessary to look at its historical origins. This is not to say that the crisis was an inevitable outcome of Italian historical development, rather, the aim is to highlight some of the features, especially of the post war period, which help explain the range of probings and testing of the 'social contract', referred to by Barrington Moore.

This background to the main study of the social movements will be divided into three chapters. The first will look at the relationship of the subordinate classes of Italian society to the state, taking a cue from some of Gramsci's writings on the question. The second will deal with the organisations of civil society; it will focus in particular on relations between employers and workers, and between the working class and its representative bodies (the unions and Left wing parties). The third chapter will concentrate on the perceptions of injustice and the formulation of 'standards of condemnation' which anticipated and prepared the mass social awakening and mobilisation at the end of the 1960's.

This outline of the period before the eruption of the social movements is necessarily selective and partial; it

attempts to delineate developments leading up to the crisis, not to provide a historical account of the post war period.

Themes are introduced in these chapters from a historical perspective which are taken up and developed in parts 3 and 4. The crisis of reformism is discussed in detail in Chapter 7, in terms of the educational policies of the Centre Left government which provoked a storm of protest from students. Distrust of the state is explored in Chapter 14 with particular relation to the conflicting conceptions of law and order thrown up by the student and workers' movement. The 'moral outrage' expressed in the slogans of workers' demonstrations is connected up in Chapter 19 to historical grievances. The importance of the historical legacy will be seen in how the social actors perceived injustices and the social movements drew on the past to make sense of and ennoble their struggles.

CHAPTER 4: A DISTRUSTED STATE

Recurrent questions in Italian historiography and political discussion have been: why is the Italian nation-state so lacking in social and political cohesion? what has led to the incapacity of the ruling bloc to 'modernise' Italy's institutions? Some writers have traced the roots of the problem back to the failure of the attempt to found an absolutist state in Italy in the late middle ages, but the usual point of departure for analyses is the Risorgimento, the movement of national unification in the mid-19th century. The key theses setting the agenda for debate were set out in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks.(1) For Gramsci, the model bourgeois revolution - the French Revolution - was the yardstick for assessing the Risorgimento, which he called a 'failed revolution' ('rivoluzione mancata'). According to Gramsci, the failure of the Italian bourgeoisie to form a national-popular alliance, involving the subordinate classes in the struggle against the backward landowners, meant that the unification remained formal rather than real. The division between North and South, corresponding to the compromise between Northern capital and the Southern 'latifondisti', and the exclusion of the great mass of the population from participation in the political life of the new state, and meant that a conservative settlement was reached at the expense of economic and social progress. For Gramsci only the Italian proletariat, in alliance with poor peasants, could make a nation out of Italy. Whether Gramsci's analyses

withstand criticism by historians is a matter for debate, but the liveliness of the discussion since the mid '60's suggests that they are useful in giving pointers to understanding the contemporary crisis of the Italian state.

One of Gramsci's concerns, the externality of the popular classes to the formation and subsequent history of the Italian state, is of particular interest. The Southern peasantry exemplified this hostility or indifference to nationhood. It was tied by intense local and family loyalties, and shared cultures and dialects having little affinity with a national culture. This peasantry did not identify with Italy as a State, and saw its utopias in the Americas rather than in the peninsula. But the working class of the North, despite its relative privileges, also found itself in conflict with a repressive state.(2) The experience of universal suffrage was an interlude between periods of government exclusively by and for social élites. There was only one free general election before the fascists took power in 1922. In other words, the Italian working class before 1945 did not develop a strong sense of citizenship through participation in political parties, elections, voting and celebrations of formal freedoms and equalities.

The other major processes whereby the working class in W. Europe was 'nationalised' - education and war - affected Italian workers less than those of other countries. Education had little impact on the predominant use of dialect, and acted more effectively as a channel for middle class social mobility than as a means of promoting mass civic consciousness. Wars

mobilised sections of the population in a way only paralleled by spurts of industrialisation, and aggravated class tensions, creating horizontal solidarities that threatened the unity of the state. The debacle of late 19th century Italian imperialist expeditions at Adowa, the mutinies and non-collaboration during the 1914-18 war, and the disastrous fascist military campaigns - all these proved counter-productive for the ruling bloc. They also fuelled opposition to nationalism in the form of anti-militarism, anti-statism and internationalism. The persistence of anarcho-syndicalist tendencies within the working class and the widespread identification of the state with all society's evils testify to the traditions of popular anti-statism.

In the post 1945 period the relationship between the working class and the state changed. The establishment of a democratic republic changed the rules of political conflict, and the major parties and unions of the working class made themselves the upholders and interpreters of parliamentary democracy. The principal protagonist of the Resistance, the Communist Party, took a leading part in 're-educating' the working class into this role. Togliatti's reading of Gramsci (whose Notebooks were published between 1948 and 1951) centred on the idea that the working class had the task of forging a national solidarity that the weak bourgeoisie was incapable of doing. It had to represent the 'national-popular' and lay the foundations of social and economic reconstruction, as the transitional stage to the construction of a future socialist society. In a speech of June 1945 Togliatti

claimed that:

> 'the democratic revolution in our country has never been completed or seriously developed ... In demanding the Constituent Assembly, we find ourselves in the company of the best men of our Risorgimento - in the company of Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, and we are proud of it'.(3)

But the Communist Party rank-and-file had to be taught that the new parliamentary state was "theirs" and that they had to act responsibly - a task that was not always easy. A report at the 6th Congress stated:-

> 'The persistence of sectarian positions ... is seen in the tendency to disrupt other political meetings ... singing songs with words in bad taste ... leaving work early to attend meetings, the use of banners without the tricoleur.'(4)

For many, the leadership was only saying these things so that it could fool the other parties, which, it seemed, were happy to work with the Communists for as long as it suited them.

The landslide election victory of 1948 for the Christian Democrat Party finalised the expulsion of the Left parties from government. At this crucial conjuncture democracy as an idea was linked to the Western 'camp' and to the defence of Catholicism. Future governments worked to impose their definitions of what constituted 'democratic' and 'anti-democratic' forces; the Communist Party was treated as alien, while the CGIL was treated as its instrument in the workplace; meanwhile, the 'apolitical' and 'free' trade unions were encouraged. Systematic repression and discrimination and propaganda campaigns were used by governments and by managements

in the factories to undermine working class representative structures.

The close cooperation between the state and the employers' federation (Confindustria), and the exclusion of the working class parties from government were the two axes on which Italian 'democracy' revolved in the period 1948-60.(5) Although the basic democratic freedoms were observed, there were some continuities with the fascist state that help explain the ways in which those freedoms were circumscribed and curtailed. In this perspective, it is the period of post war collaboration and reconstruction which appears as an aberration. The personnel of the state apparatuses had been mostly employed by the previous fascist regime, and the republic inherited laws that were the very antithesis of the constitution. The Rocco Penal Code, for example, includes among its list of crimes: the membership of anti-national and subversive associations, the incitement of 'class hatred' and the defamation of state institutions.(6) Although there were few laws controlling labour disputes, industrial conflict was heavily policed through instructions contained in the reports of the procurators-general, and in the circulars, letters and telegrams sent to them and to the prefects by the ministries of Justice and of the Interior. During Scelba's period as Minister of the Interior these were directed almost exclusively against forms of picketing and 'political' strikes.(7) From 1948 to 1954 an estimated 75 were killed and 5,104 were wounded as a result of police action directed against forms of protest.(8)

If the politicised and organised sections of the working class were the targets of repression, governmental policies encouraged private initiatives detrimental to all wage-earners. Laissez-faire economic policy subordinated all state intervention to the immediate needs of private capital. Whilst in other W. European countries reconstruction was carried out with the objective of ensuring full employment and full utilisation of capital resources, in Italy a policy of deflation and the containment of demand through a regime of low wages and high unemployment was actively pursued by Einaudi and his successors. State expenditure went towards the construction of motorways that suited the needs of Fiat rather than towards the creation of a welfare state.(9)

The beneficiaries of this economic policy were the big companies and sections of the middle classes. Internal consumer expenditure rose for a small minority of the population that could afford to buy the goods (televisions, cars, fridges etc.) that symbolised the reign of plenty. In 1960 only 11% of the population owned a fridge. Otherwise production was oriented to the world market. The so-called 'economic miracle' was attained on the basis of increases in productivity much greater than increases in wages. In addition, it entailed the mass migration of labour from the South to the Northern cities, and to Northern Europe.(10) The 'miracle' aggravated social tensions which made the existing political arrangements untenable.

In 1953 the Christian Democrat government tried to introduce a law (the so-called "swindle law") that would

ensure it the permanent majority which it had failed to win in the elections, but the attempt failed in the face of a mass national campaign of opposition. From 1953 to 1963 the Christian Democrats maintained power through coalition governments in which they were always the dominant partner holding the key ministries. In 1960 this politics, based on the exclusion of the Left parties, was put into crisis. The possibility of further alliances with parties to the Right was blocked by mass mobilisation against Tambroni's attempt to form a government with the neo-fascist MSI, and a wave of strikes showed the strength of the industrial working class, and the need to win its goodwill.

The nature of these working class mobilisations gives some indication of the evolution of its relationship to the state. The response to the calls by the parties in 1953 and 1960 shows that there was a strong desire to defend democratic institutions from manipulation and authoritarianism. However, the actions were largely defensive. They were a response to a continuous war of attrition waged against workers' organisations. Their point of reference was the Liberation and Reconstruction period, of which the celebration of April 25th and the battle to apply the spirit of the Constitution were important aspects. By way of contrast, the factory mobilisations of 1960-63 were offensive actions. Their chief objective was wage increases, but the mass street demonstrations signalled a revolt against conditions inside and outside the factory.

The Socialist Party response to the working class

mobilisation was to use it as a bargaining counter with the Christian Democrats. It claimed to have a programme of radical reforms and economic planning which would make capitalist development 'rational' and beneficial to the working class as a whole. However, the only reforms which the Socialists succeeded in carrying out as promised were in education, and in nationalisation of the electricity industry. The 1969 Forecasting and Planning Report revealed that achievement of objectives for 1966-68 were as low as 11% for urban transport, 16% for hospital building and 22% for school building.(11) This failure was doubly serious because of the inadequacy of State provision of services and their farming out to private agencies. The movement of two million Italians from South to North between 1960 created a demand for housing, services, education and basic infrastructures that a _laissez-faire_ government policy had not been able to cope with.

The Centre Left government created hopes of changes that would bring Italian living standards in line with Northern European countries. However, its actions were heavily circumscribed. For the Christian Democrats there was no question of allowing the destruction of the State clientelism that provided one of its power bases ("_sotto-governo_"), and for them the inclusion of the socialists had more to do with isolating the Communists and securing an incomes policy than with a strategy of structural change based on a high wage economy.(12) The imposition of a deflationary policy in 1964 had the political aim of undercutting wage demands by

increasing unemployment. This measure effectively asserted the continuity of a low wage régime, and prevented further reforms on the pretext that reform had to wait for more prosperous times.(13)

The Centre Left experiment contained elements of a longer term strategy for bringing the working class into a collaborative relationship with the state, but there was the minimum of institutionalisation. Tripartite talks between unions, private industry and the government were rarely carried out, and then outside the planning framework.(14) Although the Communist Party cooperated with legislation in parliament, it and the CGIL resolutely opposed an official incomes policy. It spoke instead of the need for more structural reforms, but little working class mobilisation took place around the issue of reforms.(15) However, the idea of reform spread and citizenship came to be considered not just in terms of formal legal and political rights, but in terms of material well-being and rights to housing, education, health facilities and other services. The 1963 general strike over housing represented an important step in this direction.(16) What was put in question during the late 1960's was how changes could be brought about; whether central governments dominated by the Christian Democrats, or indeed any government, had the will and capacity to reform; if so, how could sufficient pressure be brought on them to do so, and, if not, what alternative strategies were open to the working class.

The rigidity of the political structures and their acknowledged inability to reform themselves fed popular distrust and suspicion of politicians and the political system. Power remained firmly in the hands of the Christian Democrats, who successfully prevented an alternation of parties in government. The resulting operation of the Italian parliamentary system has been compared to that of Namier's 18th century English parliament in which there were 'ins' and 'outs', and politics consisted in 'place-seeking' and cynical manoeuvring. Percy Allum writes:

> 'the lack of an electoral alternative has led all parties to viewing their role as the occupation of as many posts as possible in the state institutions not for the purposes of transforming society but of accruing patronage ... this operation has reduced them to being the defenders of sectional interests'.(17)

For a short time, it seemed that the Socialists would be different, but the gap between their promises and their achievements widened the longer they stayed in the office. Giuseppe Tamburrano, who was closely involved with the Centre Left experiment, attributed its demise in the final analysis to the Socialist Party's failure to mobilise support within the country for its reform proposals. Instead of doing this, it lost itself in a maze of bureaucratism. Its experience seemed to prove the old adage that power corrupts, rather than its own thesis that real changes could only be brought about by holding government office.

FOOTNOTES: PART 2

Chapter 4

1. For an excellent summary of Gramsci's writings on the subject and assessments of them, see John Davis (Ed.), Gramsci and the Passive Revolution (London, 1979).

   Diana Pinto has written of the way Italy, which in the 1960's was held up as a model of 'modernisation', quickly became a focus of attention because of its crises:

   > "Seen as the 'sick man' of Europe, Italy has been studied recently as a special case among Western democracies and advanced industrial nations. Indeed its very claim to membership in the 'club' has been at times reconsidered by Italians and non-Italian alike ... when Italy was doing well she could be pointed out as an example of Western strength and success; when she was doing badly, the specificity of her 'case' had to be stressed so as not to bring in question the entire Western frame of reference."

   D. Pinto (Ed.), Contemporary Italian Sociology (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 1-2.

2. "Italian workers in general, like the hand-loom weavers of Biella ... had their political sensibilities sharpened by always seeing beside the factory-owner ... the police representative, the "carabinieri" ... and behind them the procurator to the king ... the prison ... that is, state violence"; Vittorio Foa, Sindacati e lotte sociali, in Storia d'Italia Vol 5 (2), (Turin, 1976), p. 1788.

3. Paul Ginsborg,'Gramsci and the Era of Bourgeois Revolution', in John Davis, Gramsci and the Passive Revolution, p. 43.

   For an outline of the development of Communist Party strategy in this period, see D. Blackmer and S. Tarrow, Communism in Italy and France (Princeton, 1975).

4. Giorgio Galli, Storia del PCI (Milan, 1977), p. 298.

5. G. Pasquino, 'Capital and Labour in Italy', in Government and Opposition, 3 (Summer, 1976).

6. Percy Allum, Italy - Republic Without Government (London, 1973), p. 207. See also C. Pavone, "Sulla continuità dello Stato (1943-45)", in Rivista di Storia Contemporanea 1974.

7. Umberto Romagnoli and L. Mariucci, 'Ordinamento sindacale e sistema economico nella Costituzione', in U. Romagnoli and L. Mariucci, Lo sciopero dalla Costituzione all'autodisciplina (Bologna, 1975).

8. D. Blackmer, 'Postwar Italian Communism', in D. Blackmer and S. Tarrow, Communism in Italy and France, p. 47.

9. M. De Cecco, "Economic Policy, 1945-51", in Stuart Woolf (Ed.), The Rebirth of Modern Italy (London, 1971).

10. See A. Graziani, L'Economia Italiana 1945-70 (Bologna, 1972). Especially the introduction; also M. D'Antonio, Sviluppo e crisi del capitalismo italiano, 1951-72 (Bari, 1973).

11. Gianfranco Pasquino and Umberto Pecchini, 'Italy', in J. Hayward and M. Watson (Eds.), Planning and Public Policy (Cambridge, 1975), p. 138.

12. P. Farneti, 'Partiti e sistema di potere', in V. Castronovo (Ed. Italia Contemporanea (Turin, 1976), pp. 72-3, p. 81.

13. See A. Graziani, 'Aspetti strutturali dell'economia italiana nell'ultimo decennio' in A. Graziani (Ed.), Crisi e Ristrutterazione dell'Economia Italiana (Turin, 1975).

14. I. F. Mariani, 'Incomes Policy and Employment Policies in Italian Economic Planning', in Hayward and Watson, Planning and Public Policy.

15. Giuseppe Tamburrano, Storia e cronaca del centro sinistra (Milan, 1971), p. 30; P. Farneti, 'Partiti e sistema di potere', in V. Castronovo, Italia Contemporanea, pp. 82-3.

16. P. Ceri, 'L'autonomia operaia fra organizzazione del lavoro e sistema politico', in Quaderni di Sociologia, 1, 1977, pp. 28-63.

17. Percy Allum, Republic Without Government, p. 92.

CHAPTER 5: PARTIES, UNIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The brevity and fragility of the experience of parliamentary democracy in Italy before 1945 had severe consequences for the nature and development of civil society. The parties, unions and other organisations of the working class had a longer struggle to establish their rights to exist and operate freely than in other capitalist countries. It was not until after the Milan massacre of 1898 that the ruling bloc recognised the need for a strategy designed to limit class conflict through the legitimation of some of its forms. Giolitti had to teach sections of capitalists that it was in their interests that the State did not involve itself in labour disputes. He personally tried to strengthen relations with the reformist wing of the Socialist Party and the trade unions. However, the primary role of the Socialist Party in promoting unionism, the stress given to general class representation in the context of uneven, regionalised industrialisation and of a working class in the early stages of its making, and the continued resurgence of a politicised and insurrectionary syndicalism - all these factors politicised industrial relations in country and town. In these circumstances, the formal distinctions between the political and economic roles of party and union, which characterised a reformist politics found a difficult terrain in which to grow. Revolutionary ideas flourished.[1]

The 'Red Years', 1919-20 were characterised by the confusion of the roles of union and party, and by the rise

of the new factory councils that claimed to combine their functions. It was a remarkable experiment in workers' control which remained a much discussed experience, especially in the light of Gramsci's writings.(2) Its defeat, however, opened the way to a wholesale destruction of parties and unions, rather than to a redefinition of their roles within the terms of a parliamentary democracy. The fascist regime replaced them by state-controlled surrogates. The objective of the ruling bloc had become the very abolition of civil society as a sphere of independent activity on the part of the subordinate classes. Even leisure, sporting and extra-work pursuits that had previously been carried on through the political parties were subjected to state organisation and supervision. Within the workplace a new ideology of labour was constructed by the employers.(3)

The success of the fascist regime in actually creating its own culture, and in actively intervening in reshaping everyday customs and practices was in many ways limited. However, its destruction not only of organisational structures of opposition, but of a popular memory on the part of the young and of traditions and skills of organisation, had lasting effects. Through the anti-fascist struggle and the period of reconstruction, the working class had to recreate its own organisations, and to rebuild the fabric of civil society itself. The framework for this activity was established by the winning of political freedoms and civil rights, but the power of the working class lay in its extensive network of local organisations. In particular, the political

parties played the leading role. The Communist Party in Milan organised in every quarter of the city and extended its control through recreational centres, co-operatives and organisations like Unione delle Donne Italiane (Union of Italian Women, UDI). Certain working class areas in Milan like Sesto San Giovanni (nicknamed 'Stalingrad') and Rogoredo became Left strongholds. The PCI implanted its cells in the factories; in Milan in 1945 it had 360, and by 1947 these had tripled in number. It has been estimated that by 1948 80 to 90% of Milanese engineering workers were in the CGIL.(4)

As has been noted, working class organisations developed a defensive rather than offensive strategy in the Reconstruction period. Nevertheless, this imposed limits on managements' 'right to manage' in the factories; workers blocked redundancies, imposed consultation and, in the early stages, purged fascist personnel.(5) The concerted political offensive against the Left, that resulted in the 1948 election landslide, was followed by a longer term and more difficult war against working class organisation in civil society. The political victory had immediate pay-offs for the landlords and property owners, who, with police protection stepped up the rate of evictions, cleared 'squats' and affirmed the rights of property.(6) In the factories the opposition was more tenacious.

The years from 1950 to 1959 were characterised by a long term decline in working class organisation and resistance in the face of the employers' attacks. In January 1955 Dott. Borletti, vice-president of the Confindustria, the national

employers' organisation, spoke of their objectives; he said;

> 'We need to bring order back into the factories by re-establishing those forms of discipline without which it is impossible to work; we must eliminate all those deviations and political interferences that the war, the post-war period and revolutionary illusions have introduced into company life.'(7)

The first and crucial step was the imposition of mass redundancies. This enabled employers to sack leading militants and to threaten workers as a whole with the prospect of losing their jobs. High unemployment throughout the '50's put pressure on the employed to conform to the orders of management. Those militants who survived found themselves continually under surveillance, moved from one section of the factory to another and increasingly deprived of rights to represent or be represented in an effective as well as formal sense.(8)

The dismantling of the workers' representative structures allowed management the freer use of labour within the productive process, and employers increased absolute exploitation by introducing longer and more flexible hours. Managements also introduced new machinery and corresponding hierarchical regimes of control to increase the rate of relative exploitation. The weakening of the nucleus of politicised skilled workers meant that resistance to Taylorisation had been undermined. In turn, the changes in the productive process lessened the need for those workers through de-skilling, and opened the doors to the unskilled

unemployed. Martinoli, a director of Pirelli, put the case for technological change at a conference on workers' conditions in industry held in Milan in 1954:

> 'they provide the optimal conditions for the achievement of higher levels of employment because there is a percentage of workers who look favourably and almost with a sense of liberation on monotonous work; this work does not require responsibility, a spirit of initiative and the obligation to make decisions'.(9)

The system of industrial relations created in the 1950's was paternalistic. It heavily circumscribed workers' freedoms, and punished behaviour which threatened its authority. Independent and active unionism was not recognised. The PCI was excluded from participation in parliamentary government and the CGIL was excluded from participation in negotiations within the factory. Union officials did not have permission to enter most Milanese factories between 1948 and 1968. The rights to freedoms of speech and organisation sanctioned by the Constitution could not be exercised in the factory. Instead discrimination and sackings and the careful scrreening of new employees prevailed.(10)

But paternalism also had its philanthropic aspects. It combined older ideologies of 'family' cultivated by earlier generations of entrepreneurs with modern theories of 'human relations'. Companies needed not only to suppress class ideologies but to re-articulate class relations as relations of non-antagonistic reciprocity between employer and employee; the words 'operaio' and 'classe operaio' had to be substituted by 'lavoratore'; a collective identity had to be replaced by

individualism. To this purpose companies increased differentials between groups of workers and the variable proportion of the wage linked to piece-rates.(11) The power of foremen to grant 'personal favours' in the shape of job allocation and promotion was increased.(12) This incentivisation of self-interest had a gloss of neo-capitalist consumerism in the bigger, 'impersonal' firms like Pirelli where the management aspired to American Taylorist models in which autonomies and controls in the workplace were exchanged for higher wages.(13) The vogue for 'human relations' spread, but with the emphasis on maximising productivity through Time and Motion studies rather than through strategies of job enrichment. Moreover, the tendency was to hold wages down as far as possible, especially among the smaller companies. Older forms of Catholic paternalism held sway especially in the family companies that were still intact in the 1950's. Giovanni Falk, for example, who inherited the Milanese steel dynasty, had a vision of his company as a 'little country with its enlightened governors and faithful subjects, its glorious history and values to be handed down from generation to generation'.(14) Falk in his eyes was the symbol of work, and harmony, a solid pyramid that threw out a large and protective shadow. Companies provided nursery schools (usually run by a religious order), holiday homes for children, medical services and child allowances. The provision of services was especially designed for women workers, to enable them to work, but also to bind them into the company's family by appealing to them as wives

and mothers.[15] The hold of the company ethos, however, was strongest among the white collar workers, who tended to think of themselves as middle class, and who enjoyed monthly salaries with special secret 'merit awards' for the diligent.[16]

The paternalist strategy aimed to abolish social contradictions. In fact its inflexibility and authoritarianism invested those differences of interest at an economic level with the very questions of power and politics that it aimed to eliminate. Even the big companies did not have the economic resources to act as 'little states', and gave priority to profit-making. The attempt to cultivate the 'free' trade unions, the predominantly Catholic CISL and the Social Democrat and Republican UIL, had some success,[17] especially among white collar workers, but managements preferred to establish clientelistic relations with them rather than to encourage collective bargaining. They therefore built up memberships as a result of preferential treatment, bribery and discriminatory recruitment policies. Whilst this divided and weakened workers' overall organisation in the short term, it did not help create a visible alternative to the Leftwing CGIL. Neither did the backstairs bargaining provide the adequate mechanism for dealing with widespread shopfloor discontent. Thus, when conflict occurred in circumstances more favourable to workers, it involved fundamental issues concerning rights and it was infused with political significance.

Statistics on industrial conflict, membership and elections to the Internal Commissions indicate the extent to which the employers' offensive did paralyse and dismember the union organisation built up before 1948. Strikes caused the loss of 64 million hours a year in 1948-9 and an average 22 million for 1950-8.(18) Industrial conflict in Milanese industry was sustained for a longer period, and the figures for union membership are less disastrous than for some cities. Nonetheless, the percentage of the unionised out of the total employed in the engineering sector fell from 61% in 1951 to 23.7% in 1958.(19) A central factor in eroding unionisation was the increase in the number and percentage of unskilled and semi-skilled workers being taken on, especially women and youth.(20) The nucleus of the unionised was based on the skilled section of the workforce who had been the leading protagonists in the antifascist movement. Repression reinforced division between the skilled and unskilled, whilst the growing white collar section of the workforce remained largely untouched by unionism.

The unions' response to the employers' attacks was heavily conditioned by the unfavourable conditions in which they operated during the 1950's. In the CGIL, memories of that period evoke pictures of steadfast heroism. The union activists paid dearly for their beliefs, and it was the strength of their convictions that drove them on. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was party members who made up the backbone of the union organisation.(21) A young woman organiser

who worked at the Borletti factory from the end of the decade remembers:

> 'Almost all the activists were in the Communist Party. Firstly, they trained in Party schools and then they took their battle into the union ... many were regularly sacked ... it was really a way of selecting militants; the more the bosses hit them, the more they became true political militants'.(22)

However, the strengths of the inner core of the union did not compensate for its relative isolation from the majority of workers nor for serious inadequacies of analysis and policy.

Some of the deficiencies can be attributed to the very influence of the parties: party political issues such as the Korean War and general programmes for economic renewal did not connect up with bread-and-butter questions; ideological divisions got in the way of organising around common interests; union activities were constantly liable to outside party pressures. But, these have to be related to the fact that most activists were skilled, male workers who had participated in the Resistance, whilst the majority of newly recruited workers were younger, unskilled and unpoliticised. These divisions along the lines of age, gender and union experience were aggravated by employer policies of divide-and-rule, and by the introduction of new technologies, which greatly changed labour processes, and therefore relations between sections of workers. The failure by the CGIL to develop analyses and appropriate strategies meant that it was marginalised from the everyday problems and experiences of the workplace.(23) The cultural backwardness (a looking-back to

older models of class unionism and Marxist orthodoxies) furnished mobilising ideals, but weakened the CGIL's capacity to meet the needs of a new generation of workers.

The CISL, by contrast, took the American unions as its model, and tried to break with the Italian tradition of Leftwing trade unionism in the name of modernity. It represented its members only, and concentrated on productivity bargaining at local levels. In practice, the CISL was anti-communist. It was tied to the Christian Democrat Party and under the influence of the Catholic Church. Moreover, its predominantly white collar membership within industry and the service sector made it even more prone to management pressures. The CISL's negotiation of agreements for its members that excluded the CGIL, its dependence on discriminatory recruitment for its membership and its refusal, as far as possible, to go on strike made it a de facto form of company unionism in the 1950's.(24)

Between 1960 and 1963 this system of industrial relations based on paternalism was challenged from below. The defeat of the Tambroni government due to mass mobilisations, gave workers a sense of power. The decline of unemployment and the economic upturn, put workers in a position to bargain with employers. The economic transformation of the 'miracle' years increased the numbers of workers and their relative importance as a group in society in the Northern triangle. At the same time, huge increases in investment, productivity and profits had been achieved without reform of a low wage regime guaranteed by authoritarianism within the factory. Rebellion in the factories, starting with the militancy of

the young workers in the electrical engineering sector in Milan in 1960, expressed a demand for a share in the newly created wealth. They called for wage increases and succeeded in winning considerable concessions. In the struggles the union succeeded in using wage demands as a means of unifying different sections of workers. Differentials were reduced, the principle of wage parity for women over 18 was established and a two hour reduction of working week was won. On the shopfloor, engineering workers experimented with short, sharp strikes, backed by the CGIL, in addition to the use of national general strikes and demonstrations, which were the traditional form of mobilisation. The latter were on a scale that had not been seen on the streets of the big cities since 1948. Students too marched alongside workers.(25)

The shift in the balance of class forces in Italy was reflected in the increased percentage of the Gross National Income accruing to the working class. However, it was a temporary advance that was reversed from late 1963 to 1967. Deflationary policies increased unemployment and employers clamped down on wage increases. The gains were whittled away through inflation and once more productivity increases exceeded those of wages.(26) The government did not succeed in establishing an incomes policy, and instead provided the conditions for the strengthening of management's hand. The unions were too weak to mobilise effective resistance. Above all, the unions within the factories had failed to build up their organisation; membership did not increase proportionally to the increase in the working

population, and continued to depend on the male, skilled and older section of the workforce for its leadership. Measures of union recognition and agreement to plant bargaining by the Internal Commissions were circumscribed by both management and union preference for centralised negotiation at higher levels.(27) The unskilled and semi-skilled, the women, younger workers and immigrants were the most exposed to the pressures of the labour market and to changes in the labour process. These workers' interests were inadequately represented. Union analyses of changes in the labour process led to policies of accepting technical change as good in itself rather than as inherently structured by capitalist relations. Bad working conditions were accepted in exchange for monetary compensation. Wage differentials were accepted as a reflection of objective skills together with the introduction of new grades for the highly skilled.(28) In short, the key mechanisms of division and hierarchical control within the factory were not comprehensively challenged by the unions. The anger and explosive militancy of the most oppressed and exploited sections was treated as an abberration, as evidenced by the celebrated Piazza Statuto incidents in Turin in 1962.(29)

In the mid '60's economic development centred on restructuring and rationalisation of plant to maximise the rate of relative exploitation,(30) without increasing capital investment to the level of the 1951-63 period. Speed-ups of the line and increases in workloads reached intolerable levels in some factories. Managements replaced

women and older workers by young semi-skilled men because of their physical endurance.(31) The atmosphere in the factories was no longer one of fear and intimidation, but unions had still not been readily accepted as bargainers within the workplaces. Leopoldo Pirelli, vice-president of the Confindustria, publicly espoused enlightened acceptance of trade unionism, whilst within his factories he witheld recognition from the CGIL. The idea that the factory was exclusively under management control and that it was vital to defend the conquests of the 1950's in this sphere was shared by the 'enlightened' vanguard of Italian industry and the small company owner alike. Negotiation was limited to powerless joint consultative bodies. Repression had become more selective, and management was more self-conscious about control techniques, but otherwise the paternalist model remained intact.(32)

The contradictions within the factory were not, however, displaced into the market, nor were workers' struggles for higher wages transformed into a mechanism for expanding the home market. Carli, president of the Bank of Italy, did not pursue a Keynesian economic policy characteristic of other advanced capitalist countries. The brief experience of a higher standard of living was cut short. The language of class consciousness promoted in the propaganda of the CGIL connected up with widespread resentment over social inequalities. The propagation in the newspapers and on television of ideas about Italian prosperity, and invocations to spend produced 'needs' and expectations that were frustrated by the meagreness of the wage-packet.(33)

The relationship between the capitalist interest groups and the government was also fraught by differences. The re-emergence of industrial conflict and the demise of an earlier industrial and political equilibrium made some leading sections of the capitalist class look to government for solutions. Fiat and Pirelli promoted the idea of a trade-off involving reforms in exchange for lower wage increases. For these big companies, planned wage increases and additional taxation were worth conceding if they sought social peace because their chief concern was with the costs of running capital-intensive plant. Moreover, their representatives, like Pirelli, prided themselves on being long-term thinkers and modernisers. On the other hand, the smaller companies that dominated the Confindustria in the 1960's depended on keeping wages to a minimum, and had a laissez-fairist hatred of government interference and taxation. The hostile campaign of the Confindustria against the nationalisation of the electrical industry, and its attempt to block reforms characterised its unrelenting efforts to sabotage the Centre Left government.(34) This lobby proved more determined and influential than the reformers.

The big companies did little to support the government reforms, and went along with deflation because the buoyant international market provided an outlet for their goods.(35) The half-hearted attempt to delegate the task of managing consensus to the state was ultimately a failure because the ruling bloc was not prepared to allow it sufficient autonomy to act against some of its immediate interests. However,

there were no comprehensive, alternative approaches to industrial relations within the private companies; no policy of greater flexibility designed to involve the unions themselves in the discipling of their membership. The relative ease with which the counter-offensive of the mid-60's was carried out gave management the illusion that their prerogatives were safe from serious threat.

The unions and the nuclei of militants formed in the struggles of 1960-63 were thrown into confusion by the downturn in their fortunes. Rifts reappeared between the confederations; the CISL and UIL supported the Centre Left government and its proposed incomes policy, whilst the CGIL was split between its PCI component, which opposed wage control without adequate guarantees that there would be far-reaching reforms, and the Socialists who were loyal to their government. In the interests of formal unity the CGIL ended by expressing opposition without mobilising it.(36) Attention focused on the development of national negotiations, whilst the politicking dissipated the fragile unity among the rank and file.

The gap between the representative structures of unions and Left parties and sections of the working class widened. The unions' introduction of new factory-based forms of representation remained on paper,(37) whilst the Internal Commissions did not revive their plant-bargaining activity because of the limits set by national contracts. Within the factories the PCI cells withered, and many of their papers ceased publication.(38) Outside the factory, neither unions

nor parties tried to organise the unemployed. The transformation that had changed the composition of the working class through reorganisations of the labour process had also radically altered its housing and living conditions. Massive urbanisation and growth of the Northern industrial cities destroyed the roots of older political sub-cultures.

In the 1950's the grass-roots structures of the political parties - the parish structure on which the Christian Democrats depended, and the sections of the Left parties - had adapted to the relatively slow demographic changes. A political geography of 'red' and 'white' zones had been fairly clearly delineated and the associations of civil society were permeated by political affiliations. Especially in the case of the PCI, party-life defined social horizons, and an intense and embattled community spirit was formed. Much political mobilisation and activity was functional to the preservation of the organisation. In the cities there were quarters where the urban space (the courtyards of the tenement houses, the local '<u>osteria</u>') served to underpin social solidarity. However the rapid urbanisation of the 'miracle' years provoked the decomposition of these communities.(39)

The bases of the Left parties were hit in several ways. Thousands of migrants, particularly from the South, went into peripheral areas of the cities where the parties had no pre-existing organisation, or into inner city areas that became heavily overpopulated.(40) The party sections were used to relating to relatively stable communities of families, and were ill-prepared to cope with the needs of the solitary

male immigrant. The Church organisations for immigrant workers and the Christian Democrats had more adequate ways and means for dealing with immediate material wants. The letter of recommendation for the job and the provision of charity fitted with paternalist practices in the factory. Then the immigrants themselves made up for all the shortcomings of the welfare services with the organisation of self-help, usually on a family basis. In an atmosphere that was often one of discrimination against the Southerner ('terrone'), solidarity among immigrants led to a certain 'ghettoisation'.(41) The incapacity of the Left parties to respond to the needs of these people by fighting for the provision of housing, against high rents and for real equalities of living conditions with the older generation of inhabitants meant that they were not attracted to the existing political structures.

Urban development also involved a progressive undermining of the traditional working class strongholds. Previously peripheral areas of the cities suddenly became relatively central, and prone to 'gentrification' by the middle classes, whilst the centre was monopolised by the office block and big shops.(42) Then more general changes in society overtook the parties. Within the working class a gap grew up between the fathers whose politics were formed in the period of the Resistance and Cold War, and children who were becoming adults within a world of East-West detente and relative international capitalist growth. Both the ideologies of a Stalinist Marxism that forecast imminent

economic collapse, and of traditional Catholic morality were losing their relevance.(43) Communist Party membership figures show a steady decline for the period 1954 to 1968. As a percentage of the industrial working class it was falling, but the fall in the membership of the youth federation (FGCI) was even more dramatic.(44)

The inability of the PCI, and of the PSI (which was ceasing to be a mass party), to recruit, represent and mobilise workers, and particularly immigrant workers, youth and women, signalled a failure to deal with the major social transformations of post war Italy.(45) Taylorisation, urbanisation, mass schooling and mass migration were important aspects of the re-making of the Italian working class in the post war decades. Yet, the Communist Party did not know how to organise around the social conflicts they engendered. The parties' and unions' inability to interpret and represent discontent in civil society was accompanied by their tendency to look to parliament and the state to resolve or alleviate the contradictions that had been accumulated in the period of economic boom. Action in civil society was subordinated to parliamentary manoeuvres, electioneering and forms of pressure group politics. The PSI was immobilised from 1963 because of its involvement in government and owed its influence in the CGIL to its personnel in the leadership rather than on the shopfloor, whilst in the constituencies it too used the spoils of office to cultivate a clientelist vote. It underwent the classic Italian political process of 'transformism'.(46) The PCI remained in official opposition,

but within parliament cooperated in drafting laws and by voting with the government. Whilst the PCI remained a mass party of the working class, and its leaders stressed the importance of membership and an implantation in civil society, in the period 1954 to 1968 it was undergoing a process of 'electoralisation'. The party's votes marginally increased, but its membership declined.(47) In 1968 the PCI's capacity to mobilise subordinate groups had seldom been weaker. It followed rather than led the mass social movements of 1968-9.

This incapacity of the political parties of the Left and the unions to articulate and represent discontent within civil society meant that when people mobilised, they resorted to disruption rather than to the ballot-box or to petitioning. The claims of the politicians and trade unionists about the importance of organisation, discipline and alternative reforms went unheard. Where the official organisations in centres of discontent (like large factories and universities) were weakest, the forms of protest tended to be the most unruly. One of the most dramatic examples which showed this in 1968-9 was social conflict in Turin; the very factors which had weakened the resistance of workers and subordinate groups - immigration, repressive paternalism, scientific management, 'de-politicisation' - created the conditions for a highly radicalised revolt. The steady erosion and destruction of the sense of community within the workplace and the city created a need to build that community through collective resistance. However, there was nothing automatic

about this process. Resistance grew up because of changes in how individuals and groups perceived their situation.

FOOTNOTES: PART 2

Chapter 5

1. Giovanna Procacci, 'Caratteri dello sviluppo economico in Italia dalle fine del secolo alla prima guerra mondiale', in Archivio Sardo, 4-5, 1975, pp. 81-135.

2. See Gwyn Williams, Proletarian Order (London, 1975).

3. Adrian Lyttleton, The Seizure of Power (London, 1973); Luisa Passerini, "Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism", in History Workshop Journal, 8, Autumn , 1979, pp. 82-109.

4. S. Vento, 'Milano', in R. Rugafiori, F. Levi and S. Vento, Il Triangolo Industriale (Milan, 1974), p.

5. One worker from the Sit Siemens in Milan recalled that some managers were not allowed into the factory unless they were carrying a copy of L'Unità, the Communist daily; see I. Regalia, Lotte operaie e sindacato Vol. 4, p. 34.

6. G. Consonni and G. Tonon, 'Aspetti della questione urbana a Milano dal fascismo alla ricostruzione', in Classe (June, 1976), pp. 43-101.

7. Scintilla (April, 1955). Factory paper at Borletti's in Milan.

8. See E. Pugno and S. Garavini, Gli anni duri alla Fiat (Turin, 1974); Giuseppe Della Rocca, "L'offensiva politica degli imprenditori nelle fabbriche", Extract of Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 1974-5, pp. 609-639.

9. Giuseppe Della Rocca, "L'offensiva politica degli imprenditori", p. 612.

10. The 1957 Parliamentary Commission on working conditions in factories found many instances of abuse of workers' rights; one testimony went: "Before being employed information is asked on your opinions about politics, the unions, and family life. On being employed, the worker must present two photographs for the company files. It is as if he is about to enter a prison rather than a factory." (From Libro Bianco della Gioventù delle Officine Borletti a cura della Commissione Giovenile FIOM)

11. A. Illuminati, Lavoro e rivoluzione (Milan, 1974), p. 129; M. Regini and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e organizzazione del lavoro (Milan, 1974), pp. 17-30.

12. For a fascinating account of relations between male workers and foremen which tells of picnics in the countryside as well as of arbitrary despotism in the factory, see Franco Platania, "23 years at Fiat", in Red Notes, Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis (London, 1979).

13. P. Bolchini, La Pirelli: operai e padroni (Florence, 1967), p. 97.

14. G. Manzini, Una vita operaia (Turin, 1976), p. 110.

15. Scuola Serale CNAS, Borletti (Milan, 1970).

16. Aldo Marchetti, 'Linea sindacale e reorganizzazione del lavoro negli uffici, 1948-75', Classe, 13, February 1977, pp. 172-3.

17. See glossary for brief outline of differences between the union confederations.

18. Bianca Beccalli, 'Scioperi e organizzazione sindacale', in Rassegna di Sociologia, XII, 1971, pp. 91-3.

19. Ibid., pp. 101-2.

20. The number of women employed in the province of Milan rose from 1950 to 1960 by 22%. The increase was mostly in factories requiring seasonal labour (e.g. ice cream production), the telecommunication sector's assembly lines where women predominated, and in the service sector. Women's patterns of employment typically met the requirements of cheapness, seasonality and flexibility.

21. Alessandro Pizzorno, 'Sull'azione politica dei sindacati', in Problemi del Socialismo, 49, November-December 1970, pp. 880-884.

22. Interview with Rina Barbieri (25.3.78).

23. For analyses of the traditional Left's failure to grasp the changing nature of post war capitalism, see the writings of Raniero Panzieri; R. Panzieri, La Ripresa del Marxismo-Leninismo in Italia (Milan, 1972); and, Lotte operaie nello sviluppo capitalistico (Turin, 1972). Also A. Illuminati, Lavoro e Rivoluzione, pp. 78-93.

24. 51% of national membership was white collar; 5 out of 9 members of the secretariat in the early '50's were members of the Christian Democrat Party; see A. Pizzorno, Sull'azione politica dei sindacati, pp. 887-890.

    For a history of Catholic unionism, see D. Horowitz, The Italian Labour Movement (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); and G. P. Cella and B. Manghi, Un sindacato italiano negli anni sessanta.

25. D. Grisoni and M. Portelli, Le lotte operaie in Italia dal 1960 al 1976 (Milan, 1976), pp. 77-9; P. Bolzani, "Le lotte di fabbrica dal luglio '60 al centro sinistra", in Classe, 16, December 1978, pp. 51-86.

26. M. Salvati, Il sistema economico italiano: analisi di una crisi (Bologna, 1975), pp. 41-43.

27. Vittorio Foa, Sindacati e lotte operaie: 1943-73 (Turin, 1976), pp. 120-121.

28. A. Illuminati, Lavoro e Rivoluzione, pp. 147-149.

29. Young Fiat workers attacked the headquarters of unions opposed to strike action and brought the wrath of the CGIL as well as the other unions down on their heads. See Dario Lanzardo, Piazza Statuto (Milan, 1981); V. Foa, Lotte operaie e sindacato pp. 130-132.

30. M. Salvati, Il sistema economico italiano, pp. 30-1.

31. Massimo Paci, Mercato di lavoro e classi sociali in Italia (Bologna, 1973), pp. 272-275.

32. A handbook giving advice on how Time-and-Motion men should behave towards the workers is instructive about techniques of self-presentation to the point of absurdity. "Young technicians", it begins, "cannot have a profound knowledge of Man and therefore can lack tact when dealing with workers; this can result in damaging their morale and professional stature ... 24 points are listed that, whilst appearing puerile, are a fundamental guide to living on the shopfloor:

    1) Show yourself full of energy
    2) Walk quickly
    3) Don't assume airs
    4) Don't keep your hands in your pockets
    5) Don't dress too elegantly
    .. 8) Don't use excessive amounts of aftershave
    9) Don't suck sweets
    10) Show no interest in the opposite sex.
    11) Display interest and not bewilderment in front of productive processes and machines seen for the first time.

12) Stand in a comfortable position that is not irreverent to the worker
13) If smoking offers occasion for reflection, offer to those engaged in the particular work
.. 15) Don't ask the worker what you should already know
.. 18) Don't greet superiors in a servile manner
19) Speak in Italian.

An extract from 'Comportamento del cronotecnico' by Dott. Luigi Novellis in Corso di cronotecnica (1964), quoted, with irony, in Megafono (June, 1970), the Borletti workers' paper.

33. The Italian working class tended to buy consumer durables by cutting back on expenditure on food and housing, showing how a new idea of "necessity" was being constructed; A. Graziani, L'economia italiana, pp. 46-9.

34. G. Tamburrano, Storia e cronaca del centro sinistra, pp. 241-256.

35. A. Graziani, "Aspetti strutturali dell'economia italiana", pp. 28-32.

36. Sergio Turone, Storia del sindacato in Italia, 1943-69 (Bari, 1976), pp. 383-418.

37. Tiziano Treu, Sindacato e rappresentanze aziendali (Bologna, 1971), pp. 49-76.

38. From 1954 to 1967 the number of factory cells nationally fell from 11,495 to 3,013; see M. Barbagli and P. Corbetta, "Partito e movimento: aspetti e rinnovamento del PCI", in Inchiesta, 31, January-February 1978.

39. G. Sivini, Partiti e partecipazione politica in Italia (Milan, 1969).

40. For all the provinces of the industrial triangle 77% of the rise in population (by 1,439,013 between 1951 and 1961) was due to immigration. Half of the immigrants went to Milan. See E. Dalmasso, Milan: capitale economique de l'Italie (Paris, 1971), pp. 452-480.

41. For a fascinating analysis of the experience of a group of Southern women in Turin, see Gabriella Gribaudi, "Reticoli sociali e immigrazione: relazioni di scala", in E. Beltrami et al, Relazioni sociali e strategie individuali in ambiente urbano: Torino nel novecento (Turin, 1981).

42. M. Boffi and S. Cofini, Città e conflitto sociale (Milan, 1972).

CHAPTER 6: THE AGITATORS AND MORAL OUTRAGE

From the end of the 1950's Italy was a country undergoing simultaneous major upheavals in its social and economic structure, so that it experienced change with a sudden intensity. John Low-Beer writes that the:

> 'innovative militancy of the Italian labour movement since 1968 may be explained partly by the conjunction of a number of changes in the society in the previous years: the rapid growth of manufacturing in the North and the concomitant immigration from rural areas of the South to the industrial cities of the North; and the increase in the student population and in the number of technicians in the advanced sectors of industry. The spread of values particular to postindustrial society thus coincided with the large influx of young immigrants into semi-skilled jobs. In Britain or the United States, these changes were separated by at least a generation. Their overlap proved to be an explosive situation.'(1)

As has been seen, the reorganisation of the workplace and the city had contradictory effects; thus, the labour militancy can in part be ascribed to the discontent of the immigrant workers, but immigration also had consequences of making organisation and resistance more difficult. The changes provoked fractures between the parties of the Left and the unions and their constituencies, and made their analyses of social realities hopelessly inadequate. So there was nothing automatic about the emergence of the spirit of collective protest and opposition. It grew first of all on the margins of the organisations and in the minds of individual dissidents and malcontents. These figures will be the subjects of this

section; firstly, in the shape of intellectuals and, secondly, in that of the worker-militant.

A Dissident Intelligensia

The period of the 1960's was characterised by a ferment among intellectuals on the Left reacting against the Marxism of the Communist and Socialist parties, and searching for a revitalised theory. Groupings which became known as the New Left set themselves a historic task; it was in Giovanni Bechelloni's words:

> 'a political culture which aimed to break with the heritage of idealism (a heritage which appeared in the thinking of the Left parties in the shape of historicism, Gramscianism, neo-realism and philosophical Marxism); to do this, it re-read Marx as the sociologist of capitalist society, but the return to Marx was characterised by the tension between theoretical inquiry and political commitment'.(2)

This project's outcome can be examined in different ways, but here the primary concern is with the New Left's critique of the organisations claiming to represent the working class, and with its role in promoting social mobilisation. The focus will be on its reviews, and on the political initiatives emerging from them.

The importance of the review in the 1960's needs to be related to the particular role of intellectuals in Italian society, especially on the Left, and to the political debate of the period. Firstly, it is worth noting that the idea of the review as a privileged format for theoretical/political intervention sprung up within the milieu of the city

intelligensia. Becchelloni describes its composition as:

> groups of people peripheral to the political parties, who teach in universities, often on a temporary basis, or in a 'liceo'. They have connections with publishing houses, live in the cities of the Centre and North, and many travel to the United States, Britain, France and Germany.(3)

Their marginality is significant in that it is also the result of a choice that involves an alternative intellectual route, which is cosmopolitan. It holds the promise of a future that others might not be able to see. In this spirit Franco Fortini wrote in a letter published in the first edition of Quaderni Piacentini:

> 'The whole of the history of the modern West is the history of individuals and minorities who decide not to bow to the inevitable ... those who, all alone, have decided not to remain alone.'(4)

In a similar vein that highlights the significance of the visionary in the mythology of the Left, Danilo Montaldi wrote of Lenin as someone who 'did not want that sort of 'reality', and by 'dreaming' realised what no 'realist' succeeded even in imagining'.(5) The roles assigned to the 'intellectual' were as numerous as the different currents within the New Left, but there was a shared belief in the power of ideas and hence, even if implicitly, in that of their authors and disseminators. A high moral tone and deep seriousness emanated from the pages of the reviews, and dominated the oppositional culture.

It is significant, however, that in the 1960's it was largely through reviews rather than through books that cultural exploration was pursued. This particular cultural vehicle was more suitable to the needs and aspirations of a new brand of intelligensia. It facilitated the expression of a collective as opposed to individualistic ethos such as that celebrated in the dominant culture's conception of the artist and thinker. Goffredo Fofi has remarked on the peculiar value of the review:

> 'I have always been convinced that reviews, more so than books, 'make culture', if only because very few really important books get published ... Working on a review requires practical knowledges and abilities; there is the exchange of opinions between people, the taking up of positions, the making of decisions in relation to what is happening, the capacity to reason and to choose between proposals.'(6)

The importance of the reviews and the sense that intellectuals had something important to contribute related to the context of rapid social change, which seemed to call for new maps and compass-readings. Bechelloni lists six reviews as being the most influential: Quaderni Rossi (QR), Quaderni Piacentini (QP), Classe e Stato, Classe Operaia, Contropiano and Nuovo Impegno. Of these, attention will be given to Quaderni Rossi and Quaderni Piacentini, which first came out in September 1961 and March 1962 respectively, and to Classe Operaia. The first task faced by the reviews was to make a comprehensive critique of the traditional Left, and the second (though it did not necessarily follow)

was to elaborate alternatives. Bechelloni has written:

> 'The history of the reviews and of the relations (or lack of them) with the parties and organisations of the Workers' Movement can also be studied as the history of the incapacity for renewal and openess on the part of the leaderships of the latter.'(7)

This blockage became particularly evident in the post 1956 renewal of debate on democracy, though it should be pointed out that this was most lively in the Socialist Party where there was a greater range of opinion from pro-Soviet to social libertarian than in the Communist Party. Leading spirits within Quaderni Rossi were former members of the PSI like Raniero Panzieri, or part of critical minorities within it, like Vittorio Foa. The entry of the party into government in 1963 and the subsequent foundation of the PSIUP further distanced the intellectual dissidents.(8) There was no equivalent split in the Communist Party until the Manifesto group's formation in 1968, although prestigious individuals like the philosopher Lucio Colletti left in protest against Stalinism.(9) However, it was an obligatory point of reference and target of criticism as the biggest party and custodian of Marxist orthodoxy.

The critiques made of the parties were predominantly of what was seen as their 'social democratisation'. This was most evident in the case of the Socialist Party, but was also thought to apply to a Communist Party that was oriented to 'parliamentarism' and losing touch with the industrial working class. This line of analysis had a long history in

the writings of the Bordigist and Trotskyist organisations, which claimed to be the genuine heirs to Marx and Lenin. For them, the key to revolution lay in the role of the party and the adoption of the 'correct political line'. In the 1960's this approach was given a new lease of life with the popularity of the Chinese model following the 'Cultural Revolution' of 1965-6. The Chinese model answered a call for 'orthodoxy' and the wish to believe in a 'promised land'. However, the critiques developed by the Quaderni Rossi, and by Raniero Panzieri in particular, departed from this sterile tradition. They questioned elements of the traditions themselves as well as what were seen as its deformations in the hands of the Socialist and Communist Parties.

Panzieri's critique was far-reaching and had lasting effects precisely because it did not recapitulate the attacks on the parties for 'betraying' the working class or for deviating from the orthodoxies. He said quite simply that the problems went back to the founding fathers themselves, whose object of analysis had been laissez-faire capitalism. A consequence of this was that they gave disproportionate importance to planning and to the common ownership of the means of production as the defining features of socialism. It was, then, these aspects that predominated in the thinking of the modern parties. They espoused the vogue for technological change, planning and modernisation, thereby subordinating themselves to the logic of neo-capitalist development.(10) Panzieri did not spell out his own positions, but in his

writings others found critiques of the vanguardist conception of the party, ideas for council communism, and the brief for Italian appropriations of Chinese experiments in breaking down divisions of mental and manual labour. Panzieri did not live long enough to see this happen, and was not a person to lightly dismiss the parties and unions with which he had worked for so long. However, a younger generation had less caution and greater expectations.(11)

The question of alternative organisation and concrete political intervention haunted the intellectuals associated with the reviews. Above all, they accepted the Marxist insistence on the unity of theory and practice. However, they were more in agreement over their differences with the traditional Left than in how to act on their ideas. The problem was less pressing for Quaderni Piacentini which assumed the role of a forum and published articles from a range of viewpoints, including the first appearances in Italian of writings by Marcuse, Horkheimer and Habermas. For the Quaderni Rossi, on the other hand, disagreement ended in splits and the launching of Classe Operaia. The editorial group was divided in its estimation of whether the time was ripe for setting up a revolutionary organisation; whilst Panzieri and Vittorio Reiser referred to the engineering contract of 1962 as a defeat for both the unions and the working class, for the future founders of Classe Operaia, Romano Alquati and Mario Tronti, the former had indeed been defeated, but the working class had made a 'qualitative leap'.

The fate of Quaderni Rossi and Classe Operaia, neither of which survived longer than a couple of years, would be of little interest but for their place in the history of the Italian New Left. Their role has retrospectively acquired mythic qualities. Particularly celebrated were Tronti's articles: 'Lenin in England', 'Factory and Society' and 'The Strategy of Refusal', which proved to be founding documents of Italian "operaismo".(12) A key formulation was:

> 'We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first and the workers second, and this is a mistake. Now we have to turn the problem on its head ... and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development follows hard behind the struggles ...'(13)

From this perspective, the history of recent capitalist development was rethought; the major economic transformations, mass production and state initiatives to underwrite wage gains and job security were seen as responses to working class insurgency in the period following the Russian Revolution. These, in turn, created the conditions for new levels of class struggle. The 'mass worker' of the modern factory, unlike the 'craft worker' of an earlier stage of capitalist development, expressed a radical antagonism to the production process itself. The 'strategy of refusal', to use Tronti's words, entailed the refusal of production obligations (through strikes, sabotage and manning struggles) and the escalation of wage demands. Tronti interpreted these tacit and tactical practices as workers' struggles to make the fulfilment of

needs independent of capital's requirements. For him the 'mass worker' short-circuited union representation, and traditional party politics.

The concept of 'workers' autonomy' ('autonomia operaia') was not invented by Tronti, but he had an important role in defining a term which was to become a touchstone of revolutionary politics over the next ten years. (A mapping of the different uses to which the term has been put would make an interesting study in its own right.)[14] It was important not only for political activists but set the terms of wider cultural debate. In the mid and late '60's workers' autonomy was understood to mean autonomy from capital (the refusal of workers to define their need and demands according to capital's need for labour power subordinate to the rhythms of the production process), and autonomy from 'external' organisations (workers' independence from the parties and unions which were seen to be subservient to capital). As such, it represented the most absolute and essentialist conception of social movement.

However, the problem of assessing the influence of the new ideas about political movements remains. How significant were people like Panzieri and Tronti, who Barrington Moore calls the 'outside agitators'? Did they undermine the old inevitability, and were they also 'the travelling salesmen of the new inevitability'? Most people, if they had been asked this question in 1967, would undoubtedly have dismissed as irrelevant the reviews and the alternative organisations of the New Left. The circulation of the former were highly

restricted; in late 1967 Quaderni Piacentini sold 4,000 copies, and Classe Operaia sold a maximum of 5,000 before it ceased publication in 1966.(15) The organisations were weak. An inquiry by the review Nuovo Impegno in 1967 found that they numbered eighteen, but they had 'virtually no workers inside them, and little effect on struggles or presence in the factories'.(16) Bechelloni writes that

> 'this political culture was developed in restricted intellectual circles, and, during the 1960's, had only the faintest of echoes in political and cultural debate and in political events'.(17)

Moreover, the reviews were taken by surprise by the sudden rise of the student movement. They had paid little attention to the problems inside the educational institutions, or to the protest in the United States. A certain fixation with the factory conflict produced myopia in relation to other social tensions. Moreover, the reformist and modernising ambitions of the government were taken at face value as the manifestation of neocapitalist planning, so that their demise was not seriously considered.

However, measurement of influence by circulation and membership figures can be misleading. Quaderni Rossi illustrates this. It was a review with a small circulation, but a disproportionately large readership. Its seminal role to the emergence of a sociology of the workers' movement has already been dealt with in Part 1, but the review was also a point of reference and inspiration for a generation of political and trade union activists. It gave dignity and significance to workers' opinions and experience. An interview

recorded in 1967 with a union activist at the Sit Siemens electrical engineering factory in Milan is interesting on this point. She recalls that when she went to complain to Communist Party officials that they had not understood their problems on the shopfloor (tens of women had been suffering fainting fits and hysteria because of the pressure of work, but the union agreed to compensation rather than a reduction of line-speeds);

> 'they came back at me with 'that's what the Quaderni Rossi people say' and so on. I, poor thing, hadn't a clue who these people were, so I went to find out.'

She described how, when she went to speak about working conditions at meetings, 'an official was sent with me so that I bore witness to my experience, and he drew the political conclusions'.[18] The Quaderni Rossi experiment, in other words, proposed an alternative method of political work which attempted to overcome this division of labour.

The ideas coming from the New Left need to be put in the broader context of their intellectual significance, and their fashionableness. They presented challenges to the orthodox readings of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci. They were like a breath of fresh air. For example, Asor Rosa's Scrittori e Popolo, which attacked "neo-Gramscian" accounts of the Italian literature, and Tronti's Operai e Capitale were intellectual landmarks for the younger generation in the universities.[19] Publishers who sympathised with the views, saw the market possibilities opened up by interest in such radical political texts. They promoted and capitalised on

the emergence of a new market, and fed the immense hunger for cultural and political discussion with a flow of new publications. Primo Moroni and Bruna Miorelli have written:

> A great laboratory was formed in which Stalinists, libertarians, council communists, Leninists, 'operaists' and 'spontanists' all took part. Their strictly political themes mixed with Marcuse, Laing, Cooper, the Frankfurt School. Remember the enormous impact of don Milani's Letter to a School-Teacher which was printed by a miniscule publisher with organic ties with the community. If it now seems little more than ... populist, at the time it gave vent to an aggressive radical opposition to the system. Books and symbols of the international struggles in China, Vietnam and Cuba were readily consumed. The Feltrinelli bookshops sold literally tons of Che Guevara posters. The old public made up of intellectuals, trade unionists and party officials was joined by a new type of purchaser - the student and young worker ... The old 18th century idea of the bookshop as a place of culture was superceded by the modern one of the market opening on to the street.(20)

Of the more established publishers, it was Giangiacomo Feltrinelli who proved most adept at sowing the seeds of new leftism and reaping the subsequent harvest in the wake of 1968. His story is both fascinating and illuminating.

Feltrinelli, a millionaire owner of one of Milan's largest publishing companies, was fascinated with the Latin American revolution and dreamt of imitating its methods of guerrilla warfare in Italy. He was, therefore, attracted by elements of the New Left who looked to Cuba and the Third World for inspiration rather than by the traditional Left. An article in the review La Sinistra in July 1967

drew a picture of Feltrinelli:

> 'His hair, long and disorderly like a beatnik's, his moustache drooping and with a very colourful tie on, ... he spoke to us of his conversations with Fidel, and of the uplifting experience of a people ... who generously supported the fight against Yankee imperialism.'(21)

Although Feltrinelli's relations with the New Left were full of contradictions (these came into the open when a student meeting greeted him with the slogan: 'Two, three, a thousand million'), nevertheless his readiness to publish its documents and to provide financial support should not be lightly dismissed.

Firstly, Feltrinelli, along with smaller publishers like Samona and Savelli, pioneered the opening up of a new market, and, in the process, gave currency to the new ideas. Thus, the social movements were able to make use of already existing networks linking political initiatives to the publishers. Secondly, Feltrinelli's attraction to the revolutionary cause illustrates the way that romance and adventure were fashionably associated with the Left in this period. His case is exceptional, but the phenomenon of 'defections' by the sons and daughters of the wealthy and influential in Italy was to take scandal proportions.(22)

In early 1967 the New Left was marginal to political and intellectual life in Italy, but it was perhaps not as marginal as might at first be imagined. Clearly, the reviews were the preserve of a tiny minority, and the established parties dominated debate. At the same time, as analysis of the student movement will show, the new ideas made considerable

inroads into the acceptance of the parties as the inevitable representatives of opposition in the country. More generally, the New Left was a symptom of wider shifts of opinion. Many of the themes developed by the New Left on the nature of modern capitalism and on the reorganisation of the factory, touched on problems that were preoccupying people who had to live with worsening working conditions and falling wages. The themes developed by Quaderni Rossi and its 'operaist' offspring were in many ways prophetic. A marginal grouping of intellectuals managed to put their finger on the pulse of discontent and to identify its causes in the transformations of the labour process in the factories, but in addition they anticipated the radical demands. In the mid '60's few listened, but by the end of the decade the call for the abolition of grades, for lump sum wage increases, for the elimination of piece rates, for direct workers' democracy, were heard in hundreds of workplaces.

However, workers, who had little enough opportunity to come into contact with the New Left ideas before 1968, arrived at radical analyses of society by other routes. For them, the older traditions of resistance - Socialist, Communist and even Catholic - and the 'moral economies' of workplace and community - were more important in shaping their rebellion. These agitators were, moreover, 'insiders' rather than 'outsiders'.

Worker Agitators

The agitators within the factories in the period before 1968 were mainly drawn from, or had been within, the ranks of the Communist Party, and were the backbone of union organisation. They were especially well qualified for this role for a number of reasons, which related mostly to their political rather than their trade union identities. Above all, these people resisted the pressures of everyday experience that seemed to say that nothing could really be changed. A woman militant recalls the positive aspects of her experience of the party, which she subsequently left in 1967; to the question: 'Did you always believe in revolution and the overthrow of the State?', she replied:

> 'Yes, ... it seemed that at a certain moment along the road something could happen that had never happened before ... at one level, ingenuously, I believed that this society is not ours, and we must create a society of our own that is different. This is what the PCI taught and it did it well. It is not by chance that it took the best part of the working class because of its sense of responsibility ... the militant had to be very serious, honest, humble, conscientious, and presented himself to the workers by putting himself at their service.'(23)

The life of this agitator bears witness to her words, in that she was sacked several times for her activism, (a penalty she viewed as an ordinary part of her 'training'), only her struggle was also against the 'sense of resignation ... the feeling that as a woman you have to accept what you're given'.

The Communist Party membership and background was, however, no automatic guarantee of a militant's ability to represent and mobilise fellow workers. When ideology was separated out from, and even counterposed to the 'moral economies' of groups of workers, then it could function repressively as seen in the instance of the response of PCI officials to emotional reactions to working conditions, which was regarded as an "economic" issue to be resolved by monetary agreement. In the mid to late '60's, a number of agitators found themselves in conflict with the party in that they thought it incapable of organising the intense feelings of resentment and outrage on the shopfloor, and that it had reneged on its promise to bring about radical change. For them, immersion in the daily realities of the factory was also an act of purification and a return to the roots of the communist project. The role of these agitators was enhanced by their political connections, which linked them to outside networks, giving them additional resources of information and moral and intellectual support.

The Marxist tradition, in all its many variants, was undoubtedly the most significant ideology in encouraging the idea of social transformation in the 1960's. A whole history, as has been mentioned, lies behind this legacy. Catholicism, by contrast, was predominantly associated with social and political conservatism. However, radical interpretations of Catholic belief, often influenced by Marxist thought, took shape among workers as well as among intellectuals. Interesting light can be thrown on the role of agitator as

'evangelist' by the autobiography of Antonio Antonuzzo, in whom life in the modern factory provoked deep-felt moral outrage.(24)

Antonio Antonuzzo was Sicilian in origin, but his family transferred to Tuscany in search of work, a search that eventually took him to Milan. In 1961 he got a job at Alfa Romeo. For the first three years he was the typical, obedient hard-worker. He got the job after receiving help from the Christian Democrats and a charity organisation for immigrants, and gained promotion to skilled status because of his good relations with the foreman. At work his main concern was self-advancement through hard work, and, although not a scab, during strikes he went with his friends (mostly '<u>meridionali</u>' like himself) to 'seek out a woman with a good heart and seller of the wares of love'. Their idea of collective action did not rise above bargaining the rate with the women concerned.

Antonuzzo does not point to a single incident as precipitating a change from an individualist, deferential consciousness to a belief that 'there was a collective way of struggling to save the working class from its subordination'. He writes of becoming aware of the disproportion between wages and work done, but more significant is a sense of revulsion at the inhumanity perpetrated in the factory; 'When a machine broke down, you became aware of how little you mattered to the management. Then a series of technicians rushed to get it working, whilst when a worker had an accident or could work no longer they replaced him by a more efficient one'.(25) It shocked him that such things were tolerated by the Catholic

Church; 'in the name of Christ there were justified a series of injustices towards the exploited'. But it was through the radicalised Catholic FIM-CISL that Antonuzzo became a militant. He applied himself assiduously to unionising others, using his mobility as a 'jolly' and his speed as a worker to travel around the factory. Often he wrote articles for the factory union paper in the lavatory. In an attempt to buy him off management offered Antonuzzo a foreman's job, but he had already decided against the individualist option so that the offer could only increase his angry determination to foment revolt. His account of the treatment meted out to scabs during the 1966 industrial dispute celebrates an old ritual of collective theatre in which the 'Judas' is paid off;

> 'I collected 5 lire from every worker on my team and I said to every one of them that they should shout 'scab' when I threw the money on the bench in front of him.'(26)

For Antonuzzo the discovery of the union coincided with the creation for himself of a new identity and sense of belonging. It was deeply personal;

> 'until I joined the union I had a conception of the family as a personal matter. After joining, I changed ... in the sense of thinking about it as something inside others'.(27)

His conception of society and of his place in it had been transformed. The experience was something that he felt the need to communicate to his fellow workers. When in 1967 he became a full-time organiser for the FIM-CISL, he was given

the possibility of dedicating himself completely to the cause he had espoused. He experienced the joys of evangelism; 'when I went among the workers ... I had a host of things to say because I felt one of them and I was happy because they listened to me with attention'. Antonuzzo's rebellion against injustice was very particular and his 'conversion' to socialism was minoritarian. It was especially marked by his Catholic faith and his Southern origins, and it was lived in in a period in which the majority of workers appeared to accept their lot. However, his anger and thirst for action were not isolated and hidden obsessions. Rather Antonuzzo could sense himself giving vent to collective feelings. It was a time when the rumble of popular protest could be heard under the surface of the society; it was a time that agitators dream of.

Cracks in the Fabric

In 1968-9 Italy experienced what Gramsci termed an 'organic crisis'. Social movements broke the mould of institutional definitions of politics, and the insurgency in civil society put the authority of the ruling bloc in question. But, as has been shown in this chapter, the mould was already badly cracked before it was put under the intense pressure of new political demands. There was a massive withdrawal of support and delegation with respect to the structures of representation, especially in the light of the failure of the Centre Left government to live up to its promises. It was a clear case of the 'ruling class failing to achieve a

note-worthy political enterprise for which it had demanded their approval'. Disappointment and disillusionment were registered in the general elections of May 1968 when the Socialist Party votes fell dramatically, and the small rival to the Left, the PSIUP, won ground. However, the rift between representatives and represented went further. Emilio Colombo's summary of the cause of the crisis in progress, given to the national council of the Christian Democratic Party in January 1969, is instructive:

> 'Where have we fallen short? It seems to me that reforms have been at a stand-still, so that the structures of civil society have aged further and the whole fabric has deteriorated. Social forces have not found suitable channels for the expression of their sense of freedom. That's why the moment of pluralism ... is becoming in the reality of our society a moment of disorder. The wave of unrest, and sometimes of irrationality, is all the more disturbing when sectors, which are by nature given to reformist action, pursue revolutionary objectives because of their profound disillusionment with the methods and timing with which reforms have been carried out by the politicians.'(28)

The failure of the Centre-Left reforms had particularly serious consequences given the scale and stressfulness of the socio-economic changes following the 'miracle' years. There was the growth of widespread scepticism about the possibility of redressing injustices and reducing inequalities through parliamentary measures. The Communist Party, too, was affected by this mood, which strengthened the hand of its Left wing and dissident members. In this context, the revolutionary option did not seem very much less realistic

than the reformist one, particularly when Italian history seemed to suggest that sudden and dramatic popular mobilisations produced more results than gradual parliamentary reforms. The "social contract", in other words, could it seemed, only be redrawn through the actions of social movements. This tradition of popular protest was part of a rich historical legacy that still had adherents within a Communist Party that had been systematically excluded from government since 1947. It was, moreover, the moving force behind the agitators who were heretics looking for an authentically revolutionary communism. With the demise of the political parties, the idea of political action that dealt on the spot with problems and injustices acquired its rationale and legitimacy, even though to government ministers it appeared 'irrational'.

The ideologies of resistance and rebellion, and the 'moral economies' of groups of workers were of great importance to the process of social mobilisation which began in late 1967. Without them, the crisis of representation would have produced disillusionment without hope in change. As the interpreters and propagandists of discontent, the agitators played a crucial role especially in the early stages of the movements. Although the surge of collective defiance surprised most militants in the factories in 1968, nevertheless they were ready, in that they looked to their fellow workers rather than to the organisations as the force for change in the world. Similarly, among students it was the exponents of the New Left who were most prepared to initiate disruption and construct alternatives.

The role of the agitators was undoubtedly positive in many respects, and Barrington Moore's assessment of their importance seems to be borne out by the Italian case, though with the proviso that they were in many respects the revivalists of an older faith rather than apostles of a new one.

FOOTNOTES: PART 2

Chapter 6

1. John Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, p. 237.

2. Giovanni Bechelloni, Cultura e ideologia nella nuova sinistra (Milan, 1973), p. XII.

3. Ibid., p. XII.

4. Ibid., pp. 32-3.

5. D. Montaldi, Lenin Bisogna sognare, 1958. Quoted by Stefano Merli, L'altra storia. Bosio, Montaldi e le origine della nuova sinistra (Milan, 1977), p. 7.

6. Goffredo Fofi, "Piccola editoria: errori manifesti e virtù latente", in Quaderni Il Lavoro dell'Informazione, 1,1981, p. 79-80.

7. G. Bechelloni, Cultura e ideologia nella nuova sinistra, p. XXXVI.

8. For details on PSIUP, see glossary.

9. Lucio Colletti, 'A Political and Philosophical Interview', in New Left Review, 86, July-August 1974, pp. 3-9.

10. R. Panzieri, 'Surplus Value and Planning', in CSE Pamphlet Number 1, The Labour Process and Class Structure (London, 1976).

11. See S. Mancini, Socialismo e democrazia diretta, introduzione a Raniero Panzieri (Milan, 1977).

12. The term "operaismo" can be literally translated as "workerism". However, since the English carries certain pejorative connotations which the Italian term does not have, an anglicised version of the original word has been adopted.

13. Mario Tronti, "Lenin In England", in Red Notes, Working Class Autonomy, p. 1. Tronti's articles were collected together and published by Einaudi under the title: Operai e Capitale (Turin, 1966).

14. It would be possible, for instance, to trace developments through the writings of Mario Tronti, which lead to theorisations of the "autonomy of the political" and positions within the cultural-political arc of the Communist Party; or, to follow the trajectory of Toni Negri's thought, which in the mid 1970's attempts to redefine workers' autonomy in relation to social conflicts outside the factory.

    However, the term's usage needs also to be explored in less theorised forms (e.g. in the "commonsense" of the social movements). For some further reflections see Toni Negri, Dall'operaio massa all'operaio sociale (Milan, 1979), and M. Tronti et al, Operaismo e centralità operaia (Rome, 1978). Also Bob Lumley, Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis: Italian Marxist Texts of the Theory and Practice of a Class Movement: 1964-79", in Capital and Class, 12, Winter 1980/81, pp. 123-135.

15. G. Bechelloni, Cultura e ideologia nella nuova sinistra, p. 31.

16. Ibid., p. 167.

17. Ibid., p. XII.

18. Silvana Barbieri in an interview (May, 1967).

19. Although these books were not studied in courses on literature and philosophy, they were often read by alternativist study-groups. Very few books in fact circulate in this way, being continuously lent and re-lent. Take one of them out of a library and you will usually find it bears the marks of heavy use. In Britain in the mid '60's E. P. Thompson's Making of the English Working Class was such a book.

    The significance of the intellectual excitement generated by such moments of discovery has too often been overlooked. Richard Johnson observes rightly: "The elements of really useful knowledge that do exist in schooling occur in the cracks of the system and in spaces won away from, or in tension with, its main pressures. What happens here is an appropriation and transformation of elements of the approved disciplines and curricula, a hard, bitter and very contradictory struggle to produce critical knowledge"; R. Johnson, 'Educational Politics: old and new', in James Donald and Ann Marie Volpe (Eds.), Is there anyone there from education? (London, 1983).

20. Primo Moroni and Bruna Miorelli, 'Storia e problemi della piccola editoria', in Ombre Rosse, 30, (September, 1979), pp. 93-103.

    For don Milani's Lettera a una professoressa, see Part 3, Chapter 9, pp. 194-197

21. La Sinistra, July 1967; see also Silverio Corvisieri, Il mio viaggio nella sinistra (Milan, 1979), pp. 77-81.

22. These deflections are part of the history of the Left which is often overlooked or dealt with simply in terms of rational, intellectual choices. Yet they had important effects; for example, Giovanni Pirelli liquidated his share in the company and financed the publication of Quaderni Rossi.

23. Rina Barbieri interview.

24. Antonio Antonuzzo, Boschi, miniera, catena di montaggio - la formazione di un militante della nuova CISL (Rome, 1976).

25. Ibid., p. 175.

26. Ibid., p. 184.

27. Ibid., p. 196.

28. G. Tamburrano, Storia e cronaca del centro sinistra pp. 322-333.

PART 3

THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

The student movement in Italy, as in other Western European countries, became the archetypal movement of opposition of the late '60's. It came to represent and symbolise new forms of rebellion and discontent as it was not a residue of older historical antagonisms, and arose in a period of relative growth and prosperity. Education was widely heralded by governments and parties, especially of the social democratic Left, as the means of levelling social differences, broadening the basis of citizenship and guaranteeing future prosperity. However, it produced the bitter fruit of conflict. Youth - the generation destined to create the future utopia - turned into a 'social problem' and the angry conscience of a divided society.

The impact of the student movement owed much to the fact that it was an aspect of an organic crisis. Students were the first social group to mobilise en masse when conflict in the workplaces and in society as a whole was at its lowest level since the mid '50's. Moreover, it was the first time that students emerged as a social subject in their own right. Previously they had acted in support of other groups in a subordinate capacity. They had taken up general political questions. Now, students were important numerically. They were part of a new social grouping - youth - that came into being with the extension of schooling. But the student movement's novelty and its significance as a model of social action gave it a historical role out of all proportion to the students' relatively marginal position in society.

In this section, the student movement will be analysed in the period starting from its origins in the early 1960's to its eclipse by the workers' movement in 1969. Chapter 7 deals with the educational reforms of the Centre Left government, which created or aggravated many of the conditions that provoked the student revolt. Subsequent chapters deal with the movement in the universities, and the emergence of a specific 'student politics', with case studies of the movements at the Catholic and State Universities in Milan in 1968-9. In addition there is an examination of the movement in the Milanese schools. Lastly, there are chapters on the student movement's impact on the education system, and on its more diffused effects on political and cultural life in Italy. Although student politics grew up within the institutions, the development of the theme of 'student-worker unity' led logically to more general political orientations. The popularisation of ideas about 'cultural revolution' meant that the activities of radical intellectuals working not only within fields like theatre but also in the professions were rethought, with important consequences for the spread of conflicts into every sphere of Italian society.

CHAPTER 7: EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND THE CAUSES OF PROTEST

Defining Education

A logical starting point for an analysis of the student movement is the 1962 educational reform that established mass secondary schooling in Italy, and led to an expansion of the intake of the further education sector. However, some introduction of concepts is necessary to put the reform in proper analytic and historical perspective. To begin with, as Richard Johnson insists in his important work on the history of education in Britain, 'education' and 'schooling' need to be distinguished.(1) The two terms tend to be treated as synonymous, thereby assuming that knowledge is primarily acquired within the four walls of an institution. This idea exists not only in the definitions given by teachers and policy-makers, but in the commonsense notions of everyday speech. The conflation of 'education' with 'schooling' seems to be a 'natural' fact, whereas it is the result of a historical process with important consequences for how society's conceptions of knowledge are constructed. Richard Johnson writes that it has 'practical effects':

> 'it tends to naturalise existing educational arrangements, and to marginalise and devalue less formal means of learning. It constructs a sharp divide between school (where we learn/are educated) and life outside those institutional walls (where we work/play). It tends to enhance the role of the professional teacher and the organised curriculum over other sources of wisdom and more practical knowledges. Above all,

> it tends to hide from view a whole history of the construction of schooling or encourages the belief in some simple history of progress, a history with no costs, no struggles, no ambiguities'.(2)

Richard Johnson goes on to develop two other categories from British historical examples to describe the political strategies involved in the social construction of 'education' and 'schooling'.(3) They are the 'substitutionalist' strategy, which conceives of education in non-institutional terms, and the 'statist' strategy that focuses on schooling. Historically, the pursuit of substitutionalist ideas and practices of education arose with the popular movements of the first half of the 19th century. In them, learning was a group activity related to class and human emancipation. Knowledge was valued for its usefulness in changing the world, and education was thought in the broadest sense as the acquisition of skills and learning through everyday experience as well as through books. The statist strategy emerged at a later point when 'capital had secured a tighter control over the conditions of labour', reducing the margins of autonomy and the resources of time and income necessary for the earlier experience of popular self-education. It was directed towards increasing State educational provision and access to it for the working class. By contrast with 'substitutionalism', the statist approach tended to identify education with schooling, and to delegate power and responsibility to others, namely the public authorities and the teaching profession. Richard Johnson remarks that:

> 'Most forms of statist strategy ... deepen the separations which constitute the specifically educational forms of oppression. They deepen the divisions between adult and child, between education and the rest of living, and between professional educators and their curricula and the knowledge that is produced outside the academic institutions.'(4)

However, he is careful to stress that the strategies should not simply be counterposed or oversimplified; the statist approach has not concentrated exclusively on the question of access, but has involved struggles over the control of institutions and the nature of the curriculum and of teaching. The very creation and extension of State provision makes certain forms of substitutionalism anachronistic, and substitutionalism has tended to become compensatory. However, Johnson insists that it is not therefore defunct as a strategy. Indeed it can be said that the student movements of the '60's put these questions back on the agenda. But before looking at this movement, it is necessary to outline the previous struggles over education in Italy, and at the reforms carried out by the Centre Left government.

Reforms and the Consolidation of a Statist Strategy

In an earlier period when the mass of the population was excluded from the vote on the grounds of illiteracy, and when educational provision was minimal, not the school, but the Socialist Party and other popular organisations in Italy were the people's 'educators'. An account of pre-1914

struggles for knowledge stresses its political dimension:

> 'Socialism is a school because the leaders of the party are interested in enrolling the greatest number of voters ... then, for the workers to better absorb the principles of socialism, it is necessary they acquire the habit of reading. Already among the working class itself new personalities are arising who live the same lives as the workers and yet because of their greater intellectual achievement, they become the pioneers.'(5)

In this practice of education, learning was collective and functional to the needs of the group rather than to individual self-advancement. It also contained an idea of learning through social practice, which was the aspect elaborated by Gramsci in his factory council writings when he counterposed the 'real knowledge' and control of the production process by the workers, to the intellectual bankruptcy of the capitalists.(6)

This substitutionalist strategy, which concentrated on creating alternative educational organs such as newspapers, training militants and fostering of a socialist culture was dominant within the working class movement when it was excluded from full citizenship. With the establishment of schooling for all and universal suffrage in 1945, substitutionalism became a secondary and to a large extent residual element of the strategy of the Left in the educational field. However, it was not entirely superseded. Christian Democrat control of the educational system, the deficiencies of State schooling and the implantation of the PCI as a mass party excluded from participation in government made it both feasible and desirable to sustain some elements

of an alternative educational practice. In the 1960's there was a marked decline in the PCI's activity in this sense, but groups of dissident intellectuals to its Left were active in reviving ideas of autonomous workers' education.

For the parties and trade unions of the Left a statist strategy prevailed over the substitutionalist. The realisation of the demand for free, compulsory State education, even if inadequate and deformed, set the terms for an approach to education based on demands for its extension and reform as a public service. In the immediate post war period, they lost the opportunity provided by extensive working class mobilisation and presence in government to push through radical reforms; the primary objective was to make the existing system function. Lucio Lombardo Radice of the PCI wrote:

> 'It is not important to ask ourselves whether it is just or not that the best elements of the working classes are excluded de facto from secondary and further education, but to know if the Italian school, as it is organised today, is an efficient instrument for the reconstruction of the country.'

This approach meant accepting ruthless selection and the fundamental division between training and education.(7)

This failure to reform the educational system had long-term consequences. The tripartite division inherited from the Gentile reforms remained intact: five years of compulsory schooling for all, in which the post-elementary

stage was divided into lower secondary and training. Further education was divided into the liceo and technical institutes and then there was university for a privileged minority. The class character of the system was very marked, although it was entirely state controlled except for a few Church-controlled schools and the nursery sector.(8) In 1959-60, only 20% of thirteen to fourteen year old children got the lower secondary certificate, and at thirteen 49% of children left school. In the '50's an estimated 18% of the population used Italian rather than dialect as their main language; Italian-speakers were largely those who had passed through further education.(9) The Idealist tradition, which drew a sharp distinction between a humanist education and technical training, and gave absolute priority of the 'mind' over the 'body', had its economic rationale too. Demand was for cheap, unskilled labour, on the one hand, and for an 'educated' minority for the liberal professions.(10) Literary subjects (the Classics, History, Literature, were taught, though Sociology and Economics did not appear on the curriculum) were privileged over the Sciences. The exercise of the body was not included within school activities; not even prestigious 'licei' had sports facilities. There was no form of sex education, whilst the teaching of moral values owed much to the Church, which had reinforced its position in the post war period. It exercised its influence through compulsory religious education, strict censorship of text-books and interventions in policy-making in the Christian Democrat

Party. This also contributed to the patriarchal *régime* in which the teacher stood in for the father (the vast majority of teachers in secondary schools were male), and ruled with iron discipline. The forms of control extended directly to the family, in that from elementary school onwards all marks on tests and on behaviour were taken back to the parents; this practice was inherited from the Fascist period.

The strategy of the Left parties in the early '50's was based on criticising the ideological content of education, in particular its subjection to Church influence. In 1959 the PCI moved from a defensive position to the formulation of reform proposals for secondary schooling. It advocated a single compulsory school for all, the raising of the leaving age to fourteen, the abolition of compulsory Latin and the extension of Science teaching.(11) The idea of 'comprehensive' education contained in the proposal, which was substantially made law in 1962, was advanced in comparison to other European school systems; Giorgio Ruffolo writes that the reform envisaged:

> 'The introduction of a wide variety of subjects related to the lived culture of our time, the granting of a certain independence to departments, the establishment of extra schooling ('*doposcuola*'), and of differentiated classes and special classes for pupils in difficulty.'(12)

In effect, the reform brought Italy into line with other industrial capitalist states by transforming an *élitist* into a mass secondary schooling system. The numbers attending secondary school increased from 1,150,000 to 1,982,000 between

1959 and 1969.[13] Between 1966 and 1970 education moved from the fifth to the first most important item of government expenditure - 6% of the Gross National Income, as compared with 5.6% in Britain and 4% in France, was spent on education.[14]

The major shortcoming of the strategies of the PCI and PSI, which were the chief parties promoting educational reform, was their almost exclusive focus on 'access'. For them the problem was to extend the benefits of secondary schooling to children who had previously been excluded from the system or restricted to training for skilled manual work. The quantitative demand for more schooling and more facilities prevailed over qualitative demands. The issue of control remained marginal, and was framed in terms of 'public' versus 'private' provision, which was significant only in relation to the nursery sector. The curriculum was 'modernised' and made more 'relevant' through the inclusion of more science teaching, but forms of pedagogy were not discussed. Under the rhetoric of egalitarianism that proclaimed education as a 'right for all', there was a strong current of meritocratic and technocratic thinking that clouded any perception of the emergence of new forms of discrimination and selection within the reformed secondary school. Moreover, analysis of the relation between the more qualified youth and the availability and types of work in the economy was scanty or utopian. The Project '80 forecast, for example, projected a single education system up to the age of 16 for 80% of youth on the assumption that there would be a massive expansion in demand for technically qualified manpower.[15]

The limits of the reform were also manifested in the forms of action that the parties and unions adopted in campaigning for it. Mobilisation tended to be external to the educational institutions themselves. The issue was raised at election times. For the unions education was significant in that educational qualifications provided the basis for enlarging their definition of 'skill' as a bargaining counter with the employers. Otherwise, the unions delegated responsibility for education to the parties, which privileged parliamentary and legislative activity.(16) It was the complex task of winning assent among the parties which shaped legislative decisions rather than popular mobilisation and debate. The strike wave of the 1960-63 period did not impinge directly on the education issue, though it provided the conditions for the formation of the Centre Left government. The eclipse of 'substitutionalism' as a popular form of educational practice, and hence the decline of a sense that there were 'alternatives', meant that critiques of the state system lost a popular and radical dimension. Reform was carried out over and above the heads of the mass of the population.(17) Moreover, the lack of a consistent pro-reform current within the secondary schools themselves, and the weakness of unionisation by the confederations in the educational institutions, meant that there was no effective alliance between progressive politicians and the profession.(18)

In consequence, the implementation of the 1962 reform largely escaped the control of its political advocates. It was conditioned rather by the traditionalism of the authorities within the schools, by the right-ward shift in government

policies and by the changes in the labour market. Contradictions arising from the perpetuation of practices inherited from Liberal and Fascist regimes combined with new ones to produce a long drawn-out crisis in the system.

The majority of teachers resisted the changes in order to defend privileges acquired when they were the prestigious representatives of the State in a largely illiterate rural society. The 'autonomous' professional associations concentrated on representing their corporate interests and did not participate in constructing the reforms. Their relatively light teaching load, averaging fourteen hours a week, was not increased, but the additional work was done through the use of part-time and temporary teachers.(19) The relationship between teachers and pupils in the secondary school kept many of its authoritarian features, which headmasters jealously guarded.

Government policies did little to alleviate or improve the situation. No comprehensive programme of teachers' training was established, and investment in infrastructures to cope with the increased intake was inadequate. There were serious shortages of text-books, and class-rooms; by the next decade 14% of elementary schools worked a double shift system or rented rooms. The burden fell particularly on the working class children, especially those of the South; in 1966-67 failures to get the elementary certificate included 15% of children from secondary schooling.(20) In 1971 three-quarters of Italians did not have a qualification higher than an elementary certificate; 14.7% had a secondary school qualification.(21)

The restriction of reform to the secondary school put great pressure on the upper secondary school ('scuola media superiore') and the university. The upper secondary school had a structure which was a century old. In the upper secondary sector, the main division was between the 'liceo' (of which were of two types - the 'liceo classico' for the Humanities and the 'liceo scientifico' for the Sciences), and the technical institutes. The former tended to have a predominance of students from middle class families, with only 10% of working class background compared with over 30% in the technical institutes. It was these institutions that had to deal with the influx of students from the reformed secondary schools, who were choosing to continue their studies rather than enter the job market. In 1960, 82,000 out of a total of 311,000 left school for work, whilst in 1968 only 91,700 out of 507,000 did so.(22) The numbers going to the upper secondary school had doubled. The structures, however, were ill-adapted for such changes; a high degree of centralisation prevented flexibility: teachers had little autonomy, syllabuses were set by the Ministry of Education, and heads were directly responsible to the Minister. The result was a fall in educational standards measured in terms of attendance and the 'drop-out' rate; a report of 1969 spoke of 10% of 'liceo classico' and 24% of the 'istituto professionale' students leaving at the end of the first year.(23)

The universities too enormously expanded their intake; the number of students increased from 268,181 in 1960-61 to

404,938 in 1965-66. Legislation opened access to science faculties to students from the institutes in 1961, and in 1965 entrance by examination and the 'fixed quota' ('numero chiuso') were abolished. The number of students from the working class thereby increased from 14% in 1960-61 to 21% in 1967-68. However, the privileged point of entry into the university was through the 'liceo'. The term 'mass university' was misleading when only one in sixteen went to university.(24) The number of women students doubled between 1960 and 1968, but in 1968 accounted for just under one third of the intake.

Although the social base of the university had been broadened, a social and economic selection replaced one imposed by examination structures. The institution functioned as a sort of funnel that was wide at the point of entry and narrow at the exit. The drop-out rate, length of time for course completion and examination results showed up the disadvantages suffered by students of working class origins. An average 14% of students dropped out, though many fewer did so in the faculties of Law and Medicine which were predominantly middle class in composition. The problem of course completion was chronic, with two-thirds not finishing in the prescribed time. Examination results and future prospects related to class origin, with a higher success rate in the courses preparing students for the 'liberal professions'.(25) Guido Martinotti compares the Italian and English universities of the late '60's in terms of their social function:

> 'In 1966 about 81% of those with a secondary school certificate went to university, but only 44% succeeded in getting a degree. A comparison between the two systems shows how the two results are virtually identical; whether the selection happens prevalently before or after university, a large part of the student population does not reach the end of the period of study. In the English system this takes place through an evaluation of merit (since the selection largely precedes the university due to a limitation on student numbers). Meanwhile, in the Italian case, selection is left to the game of chance, or, to put it more exactly, to the social factors that intervene to regulate it.'(26)

Since only 5% of students received a grant, which was in itself insufficient to cover the costs of maintenance and study, the poorer students were forced to work in order to study. An inquiry in 1965-66 in five universities found that 14% of students were in this situation, whilst two-thirds depended entirely on their parents for maintenance.(27) The consequences were lived out in lower educational achievement and the abandonment of further study. Private means grew in importance as the quality of public provision declined. The staff student ratio worsened to reach 1:60 in the early 1970's, and library facilities and building did not expand to meet the increased demand.

Corrosion and Landslides in the Educational System

The reform and expansion of the education system proved a bitter disappointment to the leading reformers themselves, who had hoped it would lead to the modernisation of Italian society. They made up for the shortage of skilled manpower

and technicians that had been identified as a 'bottleneck' in the economy in the early 1960's. Yet, in the process, the supply increased well in excess of the demand. Although the reformed secondary school played its part in satisfying demand for young male workers who were better qualified and more versatile, the rise in educational expectations meant that the secondary school acted as a point of departure for further education rather than as a terminal point.(28)

Although economic considerations were important in educational policy-making, these have to be placed in the context of the political calculations and cultural orientations of the politicians themselves. Above all, education as an issue involved the winning of consent and the forging of alliances. When education was made more widely available it created expectations and hopes of betterment that were important elements in legitimating the system. The Christian Democrats were particularly conscious of such considerations.(29) A humanist political culture was combined in the Christian Democratic Party with a sensitivity to the requirements of patronage. Everything was done to avoid damaging vested interests. After the concession of the 1962 reform, which was one of the conditions for Socialist Party participation in government, further changes were piece-meal compromises designed to keep alliances intact. The expansion of State employment (which absorbed 80% of graduates) and of the tertiary sector have been interpreted as an aspect of a strategy of the ruling bloc to maintain its hegemony over the educationally qualified sectors, who were a potential source of social tension. This particular concern for winning over

intellectuals had a long history in Italy. A remark by Gonella, Minister of Education in 1946, is telling:

> 'the social order can be destroyed not only through the revolutionary agitation of the masses, but also through the slow corrosion and the consequent landslide that undermine the moral defences represented by the intellectual classes. If those defences fail, a society can tumble into disorder.'(30)

This phenomenon of "corrosion" and "landslide" took crisis proportions in the late '60's, and, because of the education reforms, involved a much wider section of society than that represented by the privileged intelligensia of which Gonella was thinking. The reforms created a whole series of new problems as well as leaving old ones unresolved. Since only the secondary school was changed, leaving the further education system unreformed, imbalance and bottlenecks developed. The universities could not cope efficiently with the massive increase in intake, and then produced graduates in excess of the requirement for qualified employees.

In the 1960's, it was more the problems within education than what happened afterwards that preoccupied students. There was considerable frustration over petty inequalities and officiousness; for example, students going to university from technical institutes could only study Science subjects, whilst those from a '<u>liceo</u>' could study whatever they wished. But there was also a feeling that this, like the organisation of exams, was symptomatic of the irrationalities of the education system. The aura of the

university was tarnished in overcrowded lecture-theatres when doubts were spread as to the intellectual merits of the professor. The committed students who read the "latest" publications (Asor Rosa's Scrittori e popolo, for instance) found themselves better informed than some of the lecturers. The crisis in the institutions was also a crisis of cultural legitimacy; i.e. of their claim to be society's depositories of knowledge.

To understand how this crisis came about it would be necessary to chart the changes within intellectual fields; to see how orthodoxies were being challenged from within a discipline, or how new sorts of knowledge were being championed. The emergence of sociology as a discipline, for example, was particularly marked by radical connotations, but the 1960's was perhaps a period when orthodoxies were widely under threat. Some general observations can be made: firstly, in the Italian context there was considerable criticism of how appointments were made on the grounds of political affiliation rather than of merit. It seemed that culture was being 'debased' (losing its essential qualities of autonomy and impartiality) in the political marketplace.(31) Secondly, criticisms were made of the "out-of-dateness" of the courses. The age of academic staff became a metaphor in a conflict in which a younger generation sought to represent "modernity" and the future society in-the-making. Thirdly, there was mounting discontent over what was seen as the remoteness of universities and further education from the rest of society. Their "out-of-dateness" was related

to their self-containment, and their attachment to a mandarin ethos at a time when knowledge and culture were being opened up to previously excluded groups. These conflicts concerned the education process and some of the earliest forms of "contestation" (e.g. counter-courses) focused on this. But they also connected up with broader political and social questions. The major mobilisations centred on Education as a social and political right.

Student grievances accumulated over a multitude of issues, but it took opposition to the Gui bill to bring them into focus. This bill was designed to restrict entry to the universities by fixing quotas. Students denounced the objective as a betrayal of the ideals promoted by the new government itself. They led the first major opposition to the Centre Left government. Ironically, it was in the field where it had achieved most that the government was challenged.

Educational reform, not economic policy, provoked a storm of moral outrage from the social group to which the PSI looked for support. To explain this, it is perhaps useful to think of De Tocqueville's observation about how the French king's attempts to alleviate his subjects sufferings made them more not less aware of the injustices. Educational reforms by improving the chances of young working class people going to university drew attention to the fact that very few did. Students went to university with great expectations and found a tawdry reality. Guido Martinotti summed up the contradictions at the heart of the situation:

> The clash is between the expectations created by social demand for education and by the egalitarian ideology implicit in the educational system, and today's realities of social inequalities that deeply structure the university system. The university has been turned from being the means of substituting economic conflicts into the site of some of the most violent conflicts in society.(32)

In the following chapters these conflicts will be examined in detail.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 7

1. Richard Johnson, The State and the Politics of Education, Units 1-2 of Educational Studies: A Third Level Course: Society, Education and the State (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1981), p. 13.

2. Ibid., p. 13.

3. Ibid., pp. 28-9.

4. Ibid., pp. 28-9.

5. Luigi Einaudi speaking of his visit to Biella in 1877; quoted by D. Horowitz, The Italian Labour Movement, pp. 46-7.

6. Gwyn Williams, Proletarian Order, p. 106.

7. G. Dorigotti, "Il PCI e la sculoa", in L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, La scuola del capitale (Padua, 1973), p. 113.

   The meritocratic approach of the PCI and PSI had class connotation, however, in that it counterposed the hard-working son of the people to the lazy sons of the middle classes; "The time has come when the portals of the university will be free of noisy vagabonds and crowds of idlers and when they will hear yet unknown footsteps - those of the worthy sons of working people"; a PCI parliamentarian quoted in M. Barbagli, Disoccupazione intellettuale e sistema scolastica in Italia (1859-1973), Bologna 1974, p. 441.

8. L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, "Le trasformazioni del sistema scolastico italiano", in L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, La Scuola del capitale, p. 18. Gentile was Minister of Education in the Fascist State.

9. Tullio De Mauro, 'La Cultura', in A. Gambino, Dal '68 a oggi: come siamo e come eravamo (Bari, 1980), p. 191, p. 199.

10. Massimo Paci, Mercato di lavoro e classi sociali, pp. 255-279.

11. G. Dorigotti, "Il PCI e la scuola", pp. 113-147.

12. Giorgio Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme (Bari, 1975), p. 83.

13. M. Miegge, "Sviluppo capitalistico e scuola", in L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, La scuola del capitale, p. 49.

14. G. Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme, pp. 89-90.

15. L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, "Le trasformazioni del sistema scolastico", in L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, La scuola del capitale, p. 19.

16. Vittorio Foa, Introduction in G. Levi Arian, 'I lavoratori studenti' (Turin, 1968), pp. 34-5.

17. Ibid., p. 37.

18. Contrast to the British case, see Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Unpopular Education: schooling and social democracy in England since 1945 (London, 1981), pp. 89-93.

19. A leaflet written by students at the Catholic University claimed:

> "Part-time or temporary teachers are a reserve army of white collar workers who are easily manoeuvred. They make up about 70% of the teaching staff and yet cost the state less than all the full-time staff."

Proposta per un collegamento studenti-insegnanti - Commissione 'Collegamenti lotte sociali'. (Undated - 1968-9?)

These teachers tended not to be in the unions at all, whilst full-time staff was organised in autonomous professional associations which were not affiliated to the main confederations.

20. L. Balbo and G. Chiaretti, "Le trasformazioni del sistema scolastico", pp. 93-4.

21. G. Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme, p. 191.

22. M. Paci, Mercato di lavoro e classi sociali, p. 277.

23. G. Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme, p. 86.

24. Guido Martinotti, Gli studenti universitari (Milan, 1969), p. 5, p. 54, p. 30.

25. Ibid., p. 96, p. 120.

26. Ibid., pp. 92-3.

27. Ibid., pp. 162-169.

28. M. Paci, Mercato di lavoro e classi sociali, pp. 277-278.

29. Ibid., pp. 263-264.

30. M. Barbagli, Disoccupazione intellettuale e sistema scolastica in Italia (Bologna, 1974), pp. 394-395.

31. Stories abounded about certain Christian Democrat politicians who were said to hold several professorial chairs in different universities simultaneously, but who were never known to give a lecture. It would be instructive to gather together material on gossip inside education institutions. High pretensions invite low slanders, and nothing is more corrosive than the drip-dripping of acid comment. On the specifity of cultural conflicts, see Pierre Bourdieu, 'The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods', in Media, Culture and Society, 2, 1980, pp. 261-293.

32. G. Martinotti, Gli studenti universitari, p. XXII.

CHAPTER 8: THE END OF RESPECTABILITY: THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IN THE UNIVERSITIES

Crisis of the Old Organisations

Both legislation on education and counter-proposals coming from the left failed to take into account the opinions of the students themselves. Students were treated as the objects of pedagogic practices and the passive recipients of knowledge. Students in the late '60's rebelled against this paternalistic approach to their problems and asserted their own needs and identities. This rebellion took the form of a social movement which expressed new demands, but not before the older forms of representation had proved incapable of channeling and interpreting student activism.

The first protests against government educational policies emerged from within the student organisations connected to the main political parties. The most radical organisation was the Unione Goliardica Italiana (UGI) which grouped together adherents of the PCI and PSI; the Intesa Party represented the Catholic students and had links with the Christian Democrats. From 1948 to 1968 these organisations took part in the Unione Nazionale Rappresentativa Italiana (UNURI), which was an officially recognised body within the universities and spoke for student interests. In 1963 it negotiated grants with the government. The ethos of these organisations derived from the world of the political and cultural élite; the preamble of UGI's charter read:

> 'The university spirit is composed of culture and intelligence. It is the love of liberty and the consciousness of one's responsibilities ... And lastly it is the veneration of the ancient traditions carried on by our free universities of scholars.'(1)

The politics of the active university students reflected those of the national parliament. UGI and Intesa stood for election to the Organismi Rappresentativi (OORR), which acted as forums of debate. The elections to the OORR in 1964-65 still showed the predominance of conservative opinions among students; UGI received an average 17% of the vote, which was little more than the fascists and just under half that of Intesa. However, there were signs of change in student politics. During the strikes of 1960-63 large contingents of students participated in the mass demonstrations, and in 1963 all the Architecture Faculties of Italian universities were occupied. Above all, mobilisation against the 'Gui bill' had national dimensions and a high level of participation, culminating in a march in April 1965. This bill for university reform proposed to limit student intake to the universities and to establish three types of course from one year diplomas to the full degree course. It was attacked by UNURI as unjust, and a committee for the 'reform and democratisation of the university' was set up in cooperation with lecturers to oppose the bill.(2)

The Architecture Faculties were especially lively centres of student politics in the mid '60's. This seems to have been due to their keen and critical interest in the Centre Left experiment, for which planning and building programmes were

touchstones. At the Polytechnic's Faculty in Milan, study groups analysed the political functions of architecture and criticised courses and learning methods. In particular, students demanded the coordination of subjects into coherent programmes of study, the integration of research and teaching, and the introduction of collective study. The emphasis was on education as 'process' rather than 'product'.(3) Radical students connected the role of the institution to national politics. Thus, the Centre Left was increasingly criticised for its failures to introduce urban planning and to improve working class housing, and the Gui bill was criticised for the way it threatened to separate research from teaching and 'technicise' the study of architecture. In 1967 opposition to the government turned into a fifty-five day occupation at the Milan faculty. This in many ways anticipated future student actions. An environment was created which was 'functional to collective living, debate and shared work'; all major decisions were taken by the general meetings rather than by UNURI; commissions were set up to examine political and educational issues with the participation of some lecturers. The authorities ended by conceding to demands for seminars and for greater choice of courses.(4)

Events in Milan, however, were eclipsed by student actions in Pisa which brought the crisis of UGI to a head, and radicalised opposition to the government. The Pisan students put themselves on the political map by stepping up the campaign against the government's reform proposals. In February 1967

they disrupted a conference of university heads, who were meeting in Pisa, occupied some buildings and clashed with police. Throughout the events the official student bodies were bypassed by the activists, and decisions on action were taken at open general meetings. But what made the Pisan students' initiatives especially important for the development of the movement was their theorisation of a new approach to student politics. The 'Pisan Theses' became one of its most influential manifestos.

The Theses applied an 'operaist' analysis inspired by the Quaderni Rossi to the student situation. They maintained that the transformation of a free market into a planned capitalism required more highly qualified labour power to meet the needs of advanced technological production, as outlined in the government's Pieraccini plan. Therefore students, who were now defined as the future qualified workers, were no longer a privileged élite, but were 'objectively' members of the working class. The political problem, according to the Pisan argument, was to create awareness among students of their real class position, and that this could best be achieved by fighting for student wages. The struggle would bring students and workers together against the common enemy - capitalism and the State.

Although the demand for student wages was not widely taken up, the Pisan approach had a strong appeal, especially among dissident Communist and Socialist aligned students. Like the Marxist heresies of the mid-'60's from which they originated, the Pisan Theses promised a certain ideological

purity in its militant refusal of parliamentarianism and reformism. At the Rimini conference of UGI in May 1967 the Pisan Theses formed the basis of a current of opposition to the leadership coming from the PSIUP and the Left wing of the PCI.(5) The narrow victory of the leadership in the voting of the motions turned out to be pyrhhic; the failure to respond positively to the growing radicalisation among students sealed the fate of UGI, Intesa and UNURI. Attempts to provide new organisational solutions fell on deaf ears; the idea of a students' union in 1967, of a constituent assembly in early 1968 and finally of an 'organisation of communist university students' in March '68 all remained a dead letter. By the end of 1968 all the organisations had formally dissolved themselves.

The fate of the para-party student organisations, however, served to conceal the degree to which the new generation of activists was formed within them. Like many of the reviews and political groupings, to which it was closely related, the new wave of student opposition to parliamentary reformism took the form of communist heresies. This is very evident in the case of the Pisan student movement, which was dominated by the '<u>operaist</u>' theories which emanated from the <u>Quaderni Rossi</u> grouping at nearby Massa, and which was among the first to get actively involved in industrial disputes, making links directly with workers rather than through the unions.(6) This early association of student politics with workers' struggles and the popularity of the proletarianisation thesis gave the Italian movement its most

distinctive character, and had lasting effects on its orientations. However, this approach also tended to obscure the problems faced by students themselves, and it was not until these were addressed that the movement was able to take mass forms.

Student Identity - Street Battles and the Politics of Violence

In the winter of 1967 and the first quarter of 1968, student agitation in the universities grew to national proportions. In November the universities of Trento, Turin and Genoa and the Cattolica of Milan were occupied, and in December the movement spread to the South with the occupation of Naples university. In January 1968 thirty-six universities were occupied. The common denominator of the movement was opposition to the Gui bill under discussion in parliament, but, as Rossana Rossanda writes: 'the students were first of all against the logic that had produced the bill, the political, academic and social mechanisms that generated it'.(7) At a student movement conference in Milan in March 1968, Mauro Rostagno outlined the nature of the conflict in progress:

> 'The new type of mass social struggle reveals the nature of the new type of social system; it is a social system that tends to destroy independent areas of activity, subjecting them to a centralised, rigid and planned control. The 'distinction' between the superstructures and structures, between economy and politics, between the public and private no longer make sense ...

> Study, work, consumption, free time, personal relations ... all of them enter into a scheme of inputs and outputs that allow conflicts but will not tolerate antagonisms.'(8)

The new conflicts involved all spheres of life and helped forge a student identity and politics. This process will be examined in this chapter in relation to the themes of political violence, and fashion, which provide important insights into the movement's image of itself in its formative period. (Analyses of the movement at the Catholic and State universities of Milan in the following sections will give a more concrete and detailed picture of its development.)

The student movement's antagonism to the State had been a major source of its unity ever since the Centre Left government had tried to reform the universities. Anti-reformism was almost an article of faith. However, it became more vivid, immediate and impelling when students and police joined battle in Rome on March 20th, 1968. Student defiance of a ban on demonstrations was met with teargas and truncheon charges. That was no novelty; the difference on this occasion was that the students fought back and drove the police off the streets. La Sinistra wrote:

> "The fight against 'academic' and 'societal' authoritarianism is now visibly unified; the whole state apparatus is behind the academic structures not only culturally but physically. The truncheon reinforces professorial concepts, the water-cannon speak for parliamentary majorities, and the old-style exam appears behind the blanket of tear-gas".(9)

The battle of Valle Giulia was a turning point for the student movement. Guido Viale writes:

> 'The government and the movement, from this moment, found themselves face to face as protagonists of a conflict with national dimensions ... The government did not miss another opportunity to force show-downs with students and workers. And the students responded by forming 'defence organisations' ('servizi d'ordine') to keep control of the streets. At Pisa, a few weeks later, a student demonstration, which ended by occupying the railway station, was organised and well-equipped; everyone wore the same crash-helmets as the Japanese and German students.'(10)

On March 25th 1968 Milan had its 'Valle Giulia'. Students at the Catholic University, who had been locked out by the authorities following their eviction from the premises, decided to re-occupy the buildings near Sant'Ambrogio. Previously conflict had always been non-violent; on the one hand, the police treated students with the respect they traditionally paid to the middle classes and the commisar of police maintained an understanding with student leaders. On the other hand, the students themselves used 'passive resistance' and tried to win public sympathy for their cause. However, on this occasion, these 'rules of the game' were broken as both sides resorted to violent means. Although the majority of the six thousand student demonstrators came to protest peacefully, the politicised activists were determined to re-occupy even if this meant a battle. Mario Capanna, one of the leaders, delivered a dramatic speech and ultimatum to serried ranks of police guarding the university gates, saying: 'We are giving you ten minutes to leave the premises that you are illegally occupying, or we will have to evict you.' ("Vi diamo

dieci minuti per sgomberare") The students, in other words, were assuming the role of the police and claiming to restore order. The police replied to the provocation with violent charges. The kid gloves were taken off, and the peaceful demonstrators, along with the more militant ones, were severely beaten and terrorised. Sixty students were imprisoned, and forty-eight were charged with serious offences. So, in the wake of Valle Giulia, the terms of student-police conflict changed dramatically. For students, the police became a hated enemy, against which it was legitimate to use force; whilst the police lost all respect for people they regarded as 'figli di papa' (the spoilt children of the privileged), and willingly 'taught them a lesson'.(11)

Guido Viale's analysis according to which the government went out of its way to provoke confrontations, needs, however, to be given more precision. Distinctions have to be made between and within the different State apparatuses which were neither uniformly conservative nor completely controlled from above by the executive. It seems that the Centre Left government had little to gain from violent showdowns with the student movement, and preferred compromises; following the Valle Giulia events it ordered the release of all those arrested and encouraged the university rector to negotiate with the movement. However, within the State's repressive apparatuses, conservative and Right-wing opinion favoured the use of force to put down disorders. In the heat of events, the latter were able

de facto to impose their policies of strong policing, and then to oblige the Minister of the Interior to defend their actions. The toll of deaths and injuries due to police charges, tear-gas cannisters and use of firearms escalated as a consequence, especially from the beginning of 1969.(12) At the same time, it should be noted that the student movement as a whole did not make distinctions between the good intentions of ministers and the actions of the police in Italy. Rather, the bloodshed appeared to confirm analyses of the State, according to which it was an instrument of class rule which was fundamentally repressive. The words of one of the movement's most popular slogans, 'Smash the State, don't change it', ('Lo Stato si abbatte non si cambia'), reflected this view.

The logical consequence of such thinking about the State was the evolution of theories and strategies within the student movement which made political violence a central problem. Pacificism was pronounced dead by common consent; as some graffitti put it: 'A revolutionary pacificist is like a vegetarian lion.'(13) Student activists learnt how to make *molotov* cocktails as part of their trade, and readers of *La Sinistra* could find diagrams and instructions to help them.(14) The idea of violent and armed struggle appeared in the movement's songs and slogans. A list of the most popular slogans in the movement, compiled by the magazine *L'Espresso*, shows how dominant the theme of violence had become by the end of 1968;(15)

Revolution, yes - revisionism, no.
('Rivoluzione si - revisionismo no')

Workers' power. Arms to the workers.
('Potere operaio. Armi agli operai.')

Power comes out of the barrel of the gun.
('Il potere sta sulla canna del fucile.')

The Vietcong win because they shoot.
('Vietcong vince perché spara.')

Violence in return for violence.
('Violenza alla violenza.')

Two, three, lots of Vietnams. Two, three, lots of Valle Giulias.
('Due, tre, molti Vietnam. Due, tre, molte Valle Giulia.')

War, no. Guerrilla action, yes.
('Guerra no - guerriglia si.')

Furthermore, the most popular song of 1968 was called 'La Violenza'. A verse celebrates clashes with the police: "Today I have seen a demonstration - smiling faces, fifteen year old girls and workers alongside the students" ... then ... "I saw armoured-cars overturned and burning, and many, many, policemen with broken heads" ('tanti e tanti baschi neri/con le teste fracassate'). The chorus-line makes clear that 'whoever wasn't there this time, won't be with us tomorrow'. ('La violenza,/la violenza, la violenza e la rivolta;/chi non c'era questa volta/ non sará con noi domani.')(16)

The violence practised by the student movement in its formative stages can be referred to as 'expressive' behaviour as defined by Pizzorno, in that the conflicts with the authorities tended to be 'ends in themselves' and often did not rely on processes of negotiation because their true objective was the constitution of a new identity. But violence was exalted within the political culture of the student movement for several reasons. Firstly, violence, real and

symbolic, made it easy to distinguish friends and foes. It drew lines of battle, and enforced alignments. It was a litmus-test showing the difference between 'revolutionaries' and 'reformists'. Violence, it was thought, showed the State's apparatuses in its true colours (in La Sinistra's words, it exposed the 'truncheon behind the professional concept').[17] Secondly, violence had a shock effect that was conceived of by the movement as therapeutic. It not only distanced the students from the bourgeois values of her/his family, but served to root them out from the inside. Notions of legality, it was thought, had to be overcome, otherwise nothing would change. Thirdly, violence created solidarity. In the words of the song, 'whoever wasn't there this time, won't be with us tomorrow'. It was a test that required a person to prove themselves. Che Guevara's 'new man' had to be created in the heat of battle, and to be like Guevara meant following him down the violent road for, in the words of a '68 slogan: 'Guevara non parla, spara', (Guevara doesn't talk, he shoots). Violence meant 'putting yourself on the line' and so 'being taken at your word'. It was a test of trustworthiness 'now' in a moment of crisis, and the anticipation of 'tomorrow's' society of fraternity. Moreover, the act of collective violence was an intense, physical and emotional experience that summoned up total commitment to the group on the part of the individual. Lastly, violence was group power in action, and the means of its extension. The broken heads of the police showed what could be done if only the oppressed fought back. It was only the beginning, but it was also the prefiguration of future revolt

and insurrection. Violence was conceived as a detonator that multiplied itself and generalised struggles, starting with 'two or three' and growing into 'many' revolts.

The theme of political violence was crucial to the student movement's development, but it would be misleading to take it literally by removing it from its proper context. It was by no means the only or predominant political focus, and was more verbal and symbolic than physical and organised.[18] It was, above all, a means of self-differentiation in its extremest form. In this respect it can be compared to the use made of fashion by the student movement, which served to '*épater le bourgeois*' (shock the bourgeois), and to assert a common identity.

Changes in Student Dress

Although changes in fashion preceded the student movement in Italy (for example, visitors to the bohemian Brera quarter of Milan could have seen the influences of the 'beat' generation), there was an extraordinary coincidence between the rise of the movement and the mass purchase of new items of clothing. The rapidity of the changes in appearance can be seen by looking at photographs taken in 1967 and in 1968. Photographs of the Architecture Faculty occupation in Milan in early 1967 show clean-shaven male students dressed in jackets and ties. Their dress is of sombre hue - browns and dark greens - and little that is sartorial distinguishes them from the rest of the city's middle class. Pictures taken a

year later show a very different image of the student. This time the Cuban-style beard is in fashion, many men and women students are wearing 'blu-jeans' (as they are known in Italian), men are not wearing jackets, unless they have a military look with cap to match. Some have red handkerchiefs tied around the neck, but the tie has been dispensed with. The colours are brighter.(19) A similar comparison of 'before' and 'after' can be made with the class photographs of a city 'liceo'; that of 1967 is formal and everyone has a neat appearance, whilst in the 1968 picture the young students look scruffy and wave their clenched fists at the camera.(20)

For demonstrations the movement developed its own sort of uniform. In winter, everyone wore khaki 'Eskimo' jackets, trousers and long scarfs. The common rationale given for wearing this clothing was that it was practical; the Eskimo had lots of pockets and was tough, warm and water-proof, and the scarves were useful for masking the face and for protecting the eyes against teargas. However, this does not explain how a certain wardrobe and repertoire of hairstyles and gestures developed within the movement. To do so, it is necessary to look at the emergence of its image of itself, and its attempt to define itself in the eyes of the world. The dress of the Italian student movement was marked by their desire to project a political self-image. Style took on political connotations in that the activists often wore their clothes as if they were carrying a banner. Commitment

was worn on the sleeve for all to see. Politics was no longer invisible to the eye, a private matter of conscience to be guessed at by the curious stranger; it was made public for all to see. Whilst in previous political movements people had worn emblems, usually the class connotations of appearance were already efficiently identifiable; workers, for example, frequently attended demonstrations in their overalls. For students, however, it was vital to dress differently in order to distinguish themselves from the middle classes from which most of them came. In fact, it was almost obligatory not to dress in a traditional manner in the student ambience to avoid being taken for a fascist.

The new appearance cultivated by the student movement was experienced as an immense release from the constraints of dull respectability. Young men experimented by wearing bright colours, which had long been denied them. For women, the new fashion of the "natural appearance" released them from the pressures to make-up and wear high-heels (many wore trousers and did not wear a dress again for several years). For the men it led to the cultivation of the wild and unkempt look, especially on the more libertarian fringes. The movement, in addition, encouraged a certain theatrical imagination, which perhaps explains the temporary vogue for Carbonaro-style mantles that evoked romantic images of revolt.[21] However, the movement also created models of what a 'comrade' should look like, and implicitly invested them with moral values. In fact, this will to set

up new standards, as well as the willingness to criticise the dominant codes, differentiates the relation of fashion to a social movement from other forms of fashion. Thus, it was not like those fashions described by Alberoni in which: 'every individual, although behaving in the same way as the others, is, in reality, concerned only about himself', because the style for the student movement was a means of 'participating in a wider solidarity'.(22) Then, unlike deviancy, there was not only a conscious breaking of the hidden rules governing appearance, but an alternative set of norms. Interestingly, in Milan a strange man known as Sacha took particular pleasure in attending student demonstrations and occupations dressed in the height of elegance in a blue suit, with shirt and cravatte or wearing a smoking jacket.(23) His deviant imagination could be satisfied only against the backdrop of a student generation that had turned its back on middle class fashions. Although there were some who delighted in cutting a fine figure, the moment for doing so had largely passed (such a moment was Feltrinelli's return to Italy from Bolivia at the beginning of the previous year dressed with Cuban flourishes); now it was more important to share a common identity.

The student movement dealt with the question of "Fashion" in largely negative terms. Appearance and clothes became issues in as far as they represented the consumerism, wealth and ostentation that the movement opposed. Thus, before the Christmas of 1968, students picketed the department store Rinascente, not only in support of the striking shopworkers,

but to oppose Christmas consumerism. Earlier in the month they attacked the opening night of La Scala in protest at the luxury and finery exhibited by the Milanese bourgeoisie. A strong streak of puritanism ran through the movement, which also reflected a masculine ethos according to which expenditure on clothes and appearance was fundamentally wasteful. It was basically thought that clothes should be practical and economical, and that appearance should be 'natural'. The utopian idea informing the new fashion was that in an ideal society there would be a rough-and-ready equality; dress would really be of little importance in judging and distinguishing people. It was an artifice that had to be minimalised in order to achieve a collective identity. The movement's idea of clothing and appearance, in other words, was an aspect of a naturalistic aesthetic which aspired to make the relationships between people transparent. Ultimately, the movement condemned the very idea of 'fashion', and would have liked to have abolished it as they seemed to have done in China.

A Moral Panic

By the first months of 1968 the student movement in Italy had radically transformed the student image and identity. Students looked and behaved differently from the sons and daughters of the middle class who had gone to the *liceo* and the university before them. Over the period 1968-69 students became 'hate-figures' and 'fashion-setters'

in the eyes of the media-consuming public. Liberal progressive opinion, represented by the weeklies L'Espresso and Panorama, was given pictures of an exotic and exciting world and of struggles against the conservative establishment. L'Espresso specialised in guides and maps designed to help the reader decode the movement's signs (the insignia of different political organisations, their origins etc.).(24) By contrast, Il Corriere della Sera, the Milan-based daily, thrilled and shocked its readers in turn with stories about student outrages. Whilst L'Espresso tried to make the phenomenon 'comprehensible', the Corriere dwelt on the 'incomprehensible'.

The campaign of the Corriere della Sera had all the characteristics of what Stan Cohen has called the "moral panic":

> "Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defied as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereo-typical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic is passed over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might

> produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in a way society conceives itself."(25)

In England the 'folk devils' studied by Cohen in the late '60's were 'mods' and 'rockers'; in Italy, the 'reds' were traditionally the 'devils', but in 1968 students assumed the role provoking a panic about the infiltration of communism and permissiveness into Italian institutions. The Corriere della Sera usually referred to movement activists as 'the Chinese' ("i cinesi") - a term which conjured up the red menace and the yellow peril in one. Its reportage of student politics gained a certain notoriety for its sheer vituperation. However, it was not only the Right which condemned the movement.

The "moral panic" was mainly felt by the political and religious establishment and traditionalist middle class, but it also cut across political cultures. One of the most notable statements directed against the movement came from Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was a Communist Party sympathiser. In June 1968 he wrote a poem expressing his loathing for the 'figli di papa' ("daddy's children");

> Now all the journalists in the world are licking your arses ... but not me, my dears. You have the faces of 'figli di papa', and I hate you like I hate your fathers ... When yesterday at Valle Giulia you beat up the police, I sympathised with the police because they are the sons of the poor.(26)

In the same month Giorgio Amendola, a leading member of the PCI, described the student movement as a re-edited version of irrationalism and infantilist, anarchist extremism. He

called for a fight on 'two fronts', which meant counterposing the patrimony 'accumulated by us over tens of years of hard struggles' to dangerous student extremism.(27)

In 1968 it is possible to speak of a 'moral panic' of which the students were the principal protagonists. They aimed to shock and disgust sections of public opinion and they succeeded. But unlike the 'folk devils' studied by Cohen who delighted in infamy without pretending to destroy society, the student movement was a movement and not a set of deviant activities. It aimed to subvert the existing institutions, and, if possible, to bring about revolutionary changes. By themselves students were powerless, and their actions provoked a 'moral panic' of limited proportions. But when students joined forces with the workers' movement that panic became more general; it became a 'crisis of hegemony'.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 8

1. Franco Catalano, Il movimento studentesco e la scuola in Italia (Milan, 1969).

2. Ibid.

3. Libro bianco sulla Facultà di Architettura di Milano (Milan, 1967).

4. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

5. Marco Boato, Il '68 è morto: Viva il '68 (Verona, 1979) pp. 100-128, p. 141.

6. See Massimo Bertozzi, 'Teoria e politica alla prova dei fatti. Il 'Potere Operaio' pisano (1966-1969)', in Classe, 17, June 1980, pp. 298-307.

7. Rossana Rossanda, L'anno degli studenti (Bari, 1968), p. 38.

8. M. Boato, Il '68 è morto, p. 209.

9. La Sinistra (9-3-68).

10. Guido Viale, Il sessantotto (Milan, 1978), p. 43.

11. Reconstruction from interviews especially with Antonia Torchi (1982); also Corriere della Sera (26-3-68, 27-3-68).

12. A publication of 1970 listed the death toll from April 1968 to mid July 1970: "Paolo Rossi, university student (aged 20) killed during a student demonstration on 26th April 1968; Angelo Sigona and Giuseppe Scibilia (aged 27 and 48 respectively), farm-workers killed during clashes at Avola on 2nd December 1968; at Battipaglia the apprentice typographer Carmine Citro (aged only 13) and the teacher Teresa Ricciordini were killed; at Rome on 1st March 1969 during clashes at the university occupation Domenico Congedo (aged 20) died; on October 28th 1969 Cesare Pardini (aged 22), a student was killed by a tear-gas cannister in Pisa university ..." In all, there were 28 deaths and hundreds of wounded. Corrente Proletaria dei Lavoratori Studenti, Le lotte dei lavoratori studenti (Milan, 1970), pp. 9-10.

13. Emilio Tiberi, La contestazione murale (Bologna, 1972), p. 120.

14. La Sinistra (16-3-68).

15. L'Espresso (15-12-68).

16. G. Viale, Il sessantotto, p. 49.

17. La Sinistra (9-3-68).

18. For an interesting discussion of the slogan as a cultural vehicle, see Aldo Marchetti, "Un teatro troppo serio", in Classe (forthcoming issue).

19. Interview with Stefano Levi, student leader of the Architecture Faculty.

20. A useful study could be made of the photographic representations of the social movements in Italy using private snapshots, news photos etc. The main collections of photographs of this kind are those of professional photographers, e.g. Uliano Lucas, Cinque anni a Milano (Turin, 1973).

21. The Catholic University leader, Mario Capanna, is said to have had a penchant for this look.

22. Francesco Alberoni, 'Movimenti e istituzioni nell'Italia tra il 1960 e il 1970", in L. Graziano (Ed.), La crisi italiana (Turin, 1979), pp. 233-234.

23. Corriere della Sera (13-5-78).

24. In March 1968 L'Espresso presented a map entitled 'Their Prophets' ('I loro propheti'); "what we give you here is a sort of ideological atlas, a genealogical tree of the principal positions of the student movement. It would be excessive to attribute to it absolute scientific rigour"; I dieci anni che sconvolsero il mondo (Florence, 1978), pp. 11-13.

Umberto Eco was a regular columnist of L'Espresso in this period.

25. S. Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics: the Creation of the Mods and Rockers (London, 1972), p. 28.

26. Pasolini's poem/pamphlet was first published in L'Espresso (16-6-68) entitled: "Il PCI ai giovani!!" It was followed by articles by Vittorio Foa and others criticising it in the editions of June 23rd and June 30th; Enzo Siciliano, Vita di Pasolini (Milan, 1978), pp. 322-323.

27. Giorgio Amendola, "Necessità della lotta sue due fronti", in Rinascita, 23, 7th June 1968; quoted by Marco Boato, Il '68 è morto, p. 234.

The official position of the PCI, however, was to give full support to the student movement; Luigi Longo, who was on the Left of the party, spoke of this movement as "posing a series of problems of tactics and strategy. We have to recognise that it has shaken up the political situation and has been largely positive ... in undermining the Italian social system". Ibid., p. 235. His arguments prevailed over those of Giorgio Amendola. L'Unità in 1968-69 carried out a struggle on one front only, and hardly a critical remark was made about student politics. See Grant Amyot, The Italian Communist Party (London, 1982), p. 175.

CHAPTER 9: THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY: RELIGION AND STUDENT POLITICS

Conflicts within the "Catholic World"

The occupation of the Catholic University (the 'Cattolica') on the 18th November 1967 sent shock waves through Italian Catholic society. Until then the university had not been touched by the political ferment of the State-controlled institutions. It was set up by the Church in 1921, as a crucial part of its strategy of creating a nucleus of Catholic intellectuals to intervene in lay culture and politics. It had always remained under the close supervision of the bishop, and many of the leading members of the Christian Democrat party were its former students. The authorities reacted to the prospect of 'subversion' and the infiltration of Marxist ideas into the cloisters of Sant'Ambrogio by calling in the police.(1) The 'ring-leaders' were expelled. However, what was seen by the authorities as an 'alien' intrusion was the product of conflicts within the Catholic world in the 1960's. The student movement at the Cattolica is of particular interest for understanding the change of 'conscience' into political 'consciousness', and tracing the development of Catholic radicalism.

In the immediate post war period the Catholic Church in Italy had to defend itself from three chief threats - Marxism, demands for the ending of the Concordat, and the 'secularisation' of society (what Pius XII referred to as

'lo spirito del secolo').[2] This it did with remarkable success through a full-scale mobilisation of the faithful in the parishes - a success which was crowned with the Christian Democrat electoral victory of 1948. The PCI was isolated (Communist voters were threatened with excommunication), the Concordat renewed, and sections of the middle classes previously aligned with the lay Liberal and Republican parties shifted their allegiances and educated their children according to Catholic principles. It was not until the thaw in the Cold War and the more liberal policies of Pope John XXIII, who lifted the veto on the Communist vote, that enabled Catholics to speak more freely about their tasks in society.

Within the Church the most important developments occurred in Latin America, where some priests were active among peasant movements and theorised convergences between the teachings of the Gospel and of Marxism.[3] Given the especially strong links with Italian missionaries, and the sympathy aroused for Latin American struggles against imperialism they became a point of reference. Exhibitions mounted at the Cattolica in 1967 publicised the suffering and oppression of the 'Third World', and appealed strongly to themes of social commitment.[4] Dissent within the Church in Italy, however, was marginal and heavily dealt with by the hierarchy. It was only able to come into the open when the 'ice' of conformity had already been broken by the social movements. One of the most celebrated cases of dissent was the rebellion of don Mazzi, a young priest

at Isolotto, a working class parish in Florence. When the bishop sent him a letter warning him against the use of the Church for political purposes, radical Catholics occupied Parma cathedral in protest.

However, the major source of dissent was not within the Church, but among lay Catholics. On the one hand, there were shifts in middle class opinion away from subordination to clerical influence expressed by the spread of ideas of 'modernism' (especially those of the 'permissive society'); on the other hand, the very success of the Church intervention in politics had had a 'secularising' effect on its own conduct and image because of its involvement with the Christian Democrat party and big business. The 'revolt' among sections of the laity can be seen as part of an older cycle of disenchantment based on the discrepancy between morality of the Gospels and the activities of the Church itself. What gave it political significance in the late '60's was the tendency towards independent action by lay bodies with close affiliations with the Church, and towards the setting up of new lay groupings. An inquiry of 1968 into the formation of groups and associations spontaneously set up on 'direct democratic' lines and with Left wing political projects showed that 36% were of Catholic origin.(5)

The CISL, which did not recruit on the basis of religious beliefs, but which had the mass of its support among Catholic workers, had already

committed itself to joint action with the Communist-dominated CGIL in response to pressures from its membership.(6) What was more serious for the Church was the radicalisation of the Associazione Cristiana Lavoratori Italiani (ACLI) which was the Catholic pressure group within the world of organised labour. In 1968 it broke its links with the Christian Democrat Party.(7) The emergence of 'class' and 'exploitation' as terms within Catholic denunciations of capitalist society, showed how Marxist ideas were being taken up, sometimes with even greater enthusiasm than within the historic organisations of the Left.

Within the Catholic student organisation, Intesa, there had been a tradition of cooperation with the Left which became closer with the increasing disappointment in the government. The Gioventù Studentesca (GS), a Catholic association of students which had no official political orientation, became a cauldron of open debate and discussion at the Cattolica. The return of sponsored missionaries from Brazil, the summer 'work camps' in the poverty-stricken areas of Calabria and the initiation of play projects among the children of the Milanese hinterland - all these experiences, which had been promoted out of a spirit of '<u>caritas</u>', excited 'communist sympathies' among students in the context of the growing dissent among Catholic intellectuals and organisations. Humanist and populist ideas connected up with Marxist theories, and evangelism took on the form of overtly political activism.(8)

Occupations: Mobilising Moral Outrage

The flashpoint at the Cattolica was the issue of a 50% increase in student fees. Already the university had higher fees than the average, and the cost seemed greater because an unusual number of the 20,000 students were from outside the province, and there were 8,500 'worker-students'. However, it was not so much the sum of money involved by the autumn rise in fees as the principle at stake which concerned most students. There was widespread anger at what was seen as hypocritical behaviour by authorities who prided themselves on providing an 'educational ladder' down to the poorest parishioners. It was described as an attack on the right to education ('diritto allo studio'). The student representative body organised an extraordinary general meeting of all student organisations, the publication of a report ('libro bianco'), a public debate and a demonstration of protest. It won the backing of the youth federation of the Christian Democratic Party as well as that of the PSIUP.[9]

The first protests, in the shape of strikes during lectures and examinations, were not popular because they were identified as 'Left wing', and education was not yet seen as political. But when the rector refused to enter into dialogue with the students, a call for an occupation won the support of two-thirds of the students. When police arrived on the scene, there was outrage at the authorities' readiness to use force, break the rights of sanctuary, and to involve the State despite the

university's continuous reiteration of its free and independent status. The use of passive resistance, following the example of the US movement, underscored the 'legalism' and the peaceful intentions of the Cattolica students, and highlighted the hypocrisy of the rectorate. A motion approved by the general meeting of the students in occupation expressed: 'indignation, suffering and deeply troubled human, civil and Christian feelings in the face of the authorities' behaviour towards the occupation'. It went on to say that police intervention 'is particularly offensive to our university that likes to regard itself as free and Catholic'.(10) The degree of support for the action, which split the teaching staff, reflected the injured sensibilities of middle class adults, who resented being treated like children. Had the police not been called, it seems likely that the mobilisation would have fizzled out, especially in the absence in mid-November of a wider national movement.

The occupation was the form of action that served most to group together the dissident students. The first occupation in November 1967 involved from 100 to 200 activists, who were prepared to defy not only the authorities, but their own families by staying overnight in the university. With the closure of the Cattolica for a week after the eviction of the occupiers, they carried out an 'information picket' ('picchettaggio di informazione'), and distributed a daily bulletin. The main decisions were taken at the general assemblies of all the students, whilst a 'committee of agitation'

ran the everyday activity. 'Commissions' were formed to hold seminars and organise specific activities. The movement began a protest guided by the belief that the authorities would see reason, and act according to their educational and moral ideals. However, through the occupation it developed its own structures and independence based on direct democracy and self-managed learning.

A motion put to the general meeting of the Cattolica by students representing the Student Movement ('Movimento Studentesco') slate in the university elections shows a particular concern for the issues of selection and authoritarianism. It was passed. It lists the demands of the movement as follows:

> On Autonomy:
>
> 1) The recognition of the autonomy and self-government of the student movement
> 2) The withdrawal of disciplinary proceedings against activists
> 3) Freedom of speech
> 4) Provision of facilities and timetabling for student movement activities.
>
> Teaching
>
> 1) The recognition of experimental courses promoted by the student movement
> 2) The generalised use of seminars
> 3) Free debate within courses
> 4) The establishment of inter-disciplinary and experimental courses open to all
> 5) The democratisation of all controls (over attendance and examinations).

Political Relations

1) The recognition of the power of the student general meeting over all important decisions concerning administration, teaching etc.
2) The publication of all official documents.

The Right to Study

1) The progressive reduction of all fees.(11)

The ideas of anti-authoritarianism and democratic self-management were particularly central to the student movement at the Catholic University. The whole political style was very different to that of the movement at the other institutions. There was no Left wing tradition; no Marxist intellectuals like Stefano Levi, a leader in the Architecture Faculty of the Polytechnic who was called in to advise during the first occupation; no experience in political organising. But these lacks were made up for in other ways; the politics were less orthodox and more experimental. This can be seen in the charismatic leadership of Mario Capanna.(12) He spoke in a way that everyone could understand and yet his speech was full of irony and vivid imagery. He made people laugh, and made them feel they had something to say. His flair for inventing words contrasted with the monotonous rhetoric of the Left which aped a humanist model "da foro" (based on the forum ideal). Capanna succeeded, in so far as he interpreted an untutored enthusiasm for politics, which expressed itself in a movement and not in party political forms.

Anti-authoritarian politics was especially important at the Cattolica because it related directly to the students' resistance to surveillance and control by the authorities,who were concerned about the souls of their pupils as well as about their education in a narrower sense. Much of the student movement's stress on free speech and debate within courses was informed by a struggle against religious dogma. This concern with the religious question was peculiar to the movement at the Cattolica. It is worth considering not only as a special issue, but in relation to how politics itself was invested with 'religious' meanings.

The challenge to Catholicism by the students was aimed against the Church as an institution rather than against religion. In many respects it reiterated the demands of the Reformation. Moreover, students occupied churches and interrupted masses with iconoclastic enthusiasm.(13) Censorship and the sterility of cultural conformity were attacked in Dialoghi, a student paper; one issue protested against interference by consisting entirely of blank copy. Demands were made for the end of Church juridical control over the university, and for the abolition of the requirement that entrants should be Catholics. A student leaflet pointed out that in the Gospels it was the poor and oppressed who were chosen.(14) Students demanded the right to control Gioventù Studentesca, the student organisation, without interference from the bishop. Proposals were also put for seminars on the Faith to replace the theology lectures. Demands focused on the accountability of the hierarchy, and

on the need for the Church to fight oppression in the world. However, it is notable that the movement made no mention of the Church's crucial role in regulation of sexuality in the university and in society generally. Rigorous moral codes were applied within the institution; lecturers and students found to be 'living in sin' were expelled, and women students living away from home were placed with families to prevent them falling into sin. Although women participated in the movement (a fact which shocked the authorities), there is little sign that feminism played any part in the demands or actions of the movement.

The simplest course open to dissident Catholic students was to resolve or relegate the religious question as a priority by ceasing to attend Mass. Thereby, belief was made personal and was withdrawn from the Church's tutelage, or it was discarded. This step was one taken by many young Italians in the 1960's, and was one aspect of the secularisation of the society.(15) However, in the late '60's, energies and enthusiasms that had previously been channeled through the Church's organisations took political forms. This development has already been mentioned in relation to the radicalisation of the Catholic-based lay bodies such as ACLI, the CISL and various community ventures, but it was also a more general phenomenon that affected secular politics. This can be shown by looking at Don Milani's Letter to a School-teacher, which was possibly the single most influential text in the student movement, and by showing how radical Catholic and Marxist ideas converged in this period.

Letter to a School-teacher denounced the selective and discriminatory nature of education, using the experiences of the small Tuscan village school at Barbiana. The themes being dealt with had a direct relevance to a movement which was fighting for everyone's right to education, and which had made teaching into a political issue. Indeed the book anticipated the movement. It was easily translateable into Marxist terminology, and was adapted and selectively used by its extensive readership. However, much of its appeal derived from its difference from standard Marxist accounts, which spoke of the objective mechanisms whereby capitalism reproduced its labour power (e.g. the Pisan theses). Barbiana Letters focussed on the individual experience of education and wrote through the voices of the children, who were excluded not only by economic but by cultural processes. Tullio de Mauro has suggested that don Milani's discovery of the politics of grammar and of the knowledge and use of words resulted from his critical appropriation of his priestly functions.[16] Firstly, the Church taught don Milani to 'intimately adhere to linguistic obedience'; the Church's language, which served to bring individual consciences into conformity with *etiquette* and principles of belief, and to free its own functionaries from the ties of social and geographical origin, taught Don Milani about the power of words. He rebelled against that use of language, but with the power of having mastered it. Secondly, Don Milani, according to De Mauro, was above all a preacher who wanted to change things. In this respect too, the 'linguistic school

of the evangelists' prepared him in that it insisted on the power of 'The Word', and on the need to emancipate the oppressed from the burdens of cultural deprivation. For Don Milani it was vital that the poor should rely on their own powers to speak and write, and should free themselves from the oppressive notion of 'correct Italian';

> 'We need anyway to understand what is correct language. The poor create languages and then continue to renew them. The rich crystallise them so that they can take advantage of whoever doesn't talk like them. Or they fail them in exams.'(17)

In his work at Barbiana he attempted to overcome these inequalities by encouraging collective authorship and linking learning to a participatory notion of democracy.

Although they were not exclusive to a Catholic culture, Don Milani's sensitivity to certain forms of oppression were perhaps best represented by radical Catholic currents. It was characterised by attention to culture as a political problem which required specific forms of action and analysis and by its focus on experience and the personal dimensions of oppression. Moreover, don Milani's example stood out for its moral commitment and appealed to feelings among students that the culturally privileged should 'go to the people'. Rossanda wrote that the letters from Barbiana were perceived as evidence of the need for an Italian version of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Yet, by contrast with appropriations of Chinese slogans and sloganising style, Don Milani offered a vivid insight into the lived experience of injustice. The book touched a generation's sense of

moral outrage and had echoes far beyond the world of the university activists. It showed the power of a religious culture to generate and activate moral standards of condemnation.

There were specific reasons for the popularity of the Letter to a School-teacher, but these need to be placed in the broader context of the convergence of radical Catholicism and Marxism in the late '60's. This relationship has not received much critical attention; Catholic intellectuals have perhaps shown more interest in the interaction of religion and politics (or in the similarities of political and religious militancy) than Marxists, who have been anxious to defend 'science' from 'contamination'.(18) Whilst it is true that many of the overtly religious elements that appeared in the movements of opposition were of tangential significance, the 'religious structure of feeling' was of considerable importance in the making of 1968. This structure of feeling had been a part of Marxist and Socialist movements from early in their history, but it had been contained and marginalised by parliamentary parties that feared uncontrolled enthusiasms.(19) In 1968 it was recreated and reactivated in the student movement.

In this light it is possible to understand how the radicalisation in the Catholic world could lead to a rapprochement with Marxism, without requiring the total abandonment of a structure of feeling based on faith and commitment to an ideal. Indeed, it could be argued that politics offered even greater possibilities for self-sacrifice,

the service of others and for apostolic militancy and, therefore, for being a more genuine Christian. However, the majority of new adherents to revolutionary politics experienced their conversion as a break with Catholicism and with their own pasts. They turned religion on its head, and dismissed it with Marx's peremptoriness as an opiate. This had serious consequences for the student movement, and generally for the relations between Catholic and Marxist cultures in the subsequent period. The moment of rapprochement was succeeded by one of division and mutual animosity.

The crisis and decline of the student movement at the Cattolica was bound up with this breakdown in dialogue between Marxists and practising Catholics among the students. In the early stages of mobilisation in 1967-8 the militant and politicised minority had been sensitive to religious feelings and beliefs. Thus, after the clashes with the police in March 1968, meetings were held of the Assemblea Ecclesiastica, and care was taken to elaborate biblical justifications for rebellion and for the use of violence. However, splits developed among activists on whether to continue to organise around religious issues, and between the politicised minority and the mass of students at the university. By the end of 1969 religion was no longer a terrain of struggle between dissident students and the authorities, largely because radicals directed their attention to other problems without linking them up to Catholicism. Above all, they abandoned the university and student struggles in favour of political agitation around the factories, which became the centres of social conflict from the autumn of 1968. Thus, the movement

evacuated its own stronghold and left a free hand to the authorities to restore the status quo.

The rector at the Cattolica had consistently opposed the student movement, and had frequently resorted to repression in attempts to root out dissent. Over two years tens of students were expelled from the university. The police barracks, which conveniently faced the main entrance to the university, acted as a constant pillar of strength to the authorities. There was no question of giving way to the student movement and allowing the university to be subverted from within. There was too much at stake. The importance of the university to the Catholic Church was evidenced by the national yearly 'Giornata della Cattolica', a day given over to collecting funds from the faithful to support their institution, and by its function in educating its lay political élite. The weakening of the students' movement was therefore seized on by the authorities to drive it from Sant'Ambrogio as Christ had driven the money-lenders from the temple. Over a two year period it disappeared from the Cattolica and Catholic dissent irremediably lost a crucial stronghold. Instead the university became a springboard for the launching of Comunione e Liberazione. This was the Catholic Church's successful youth organisation, which showed a skilful adoption of themes and structures developed by the student movement for the purposes of re-establishing the role of religion in daily activities. Although Catholic dissent continued to grow in the wake of the social movements, and gave rise to organisations such as 'Christians for Socialism', the cruel

irony of the dramatic echoes of the student rebellion at the Cattolica was that the Church learnt from it more than its opponents.[20]

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 9

1. G. Viale, Sessantotto, pp. 22-23.

2. G. Poggi, "The Church in Italian Politics, 1945-50", in S. Woolf (Ed.), The Rebirth of Italy. The Concordat was drawn up between the Fascist State and the Church, making Catholicism the State religion.

3. Francesco Alberoni, "Movimenti e istituzioni nell'Italia tra il 1960 e il 1970", pp. 253-255.

4. Interviews with ex-Catholic University students show that there were considerable differences in how the Third World issue was interpreted. Ida Regalia, a member of the Intesa group, stresses the importance of the missionaries, and makes links between the politics of radical priests in Latin America and work with the urban and Southern poor in Italy. Ex-students who identified more immediately with the Left (Antonia Torchi, for example) made Vietnam and Che Guevara their examples of Third World struggles, and counterposed the politics of guerrilla warfare to Catholic pacificism. Even so, Leftists were careful to exploit Catholic "consciences" to the full, rather than to alienate support, at least in the earlier stages of mobilisation; Interview with Ida Regalia (April, 1978); interview with Antonia Torchi (August, 1982).

5. Franco Rositi, La politica dei gruppi (Milan, 1970), pp. 140-141. See also L. Tomasi, La contestazione religiosa giovanile in Italia (1968-78) (Milan, 1978), pp. 42-62. F. Garelli, "Gruppi giovanili ecclesiali, in Quaderni di Sociologia, 3-4, 1977, pp. 277-281.

6. See Part 4, Chapter 20, pp. 432-437.

7. S. Turone, Storia del sindacato, pp. 404-405, pp. 414-416.

8. Ida Regalia interview.

9. "Perchè si è giunti all'aumento delle tasse" in Dialoghi (undated).

10. Mozione approvata dall'assemblea generale degli studenti occupanti (19-11-67).

11. Proposta di mozione presentata dal MS all'Assemblea Generale (2-4-68).

12. Mario Capanna was a Catholic University student who became the best known student leader in Milan. (These observations on his role come from a taped account by Aldo Marchetti, Claudio Frigerio and Antonia Torchi.) However, some people persisted in thinking that outside agitators explained everything. A press conference organised by Right wing students at the Cattolica claimed: The agitation in nearly every university in Europe was coordinated by 'a Leninist type organisation operating from Basle'; Corriere della Sera (2-6-68).

13. There was a protest against the Concordat by upper secondary school students (radicals, dissident Catholics and anarchists) who invaded Milan Cathedral, writing slogans on the wall like "If God exists he must be abolished' and 1929-45 = DUCE
1945-69 = DC
Report in Corriere della Sera (12-2-69).

14. 'Look at the gospel. The choosing of the poor and oppressed is made clear from the first page.' Catechismo dell'Isotto quoted in document of the Comitato Assemblea Ecclesiale, 23rd January, 1969.

15. A survey of religious attendance among students in Milan for 1968 found that half of them went to Church. In the Catholic University 65% were regular communicants, whilst only 5% were non-practicing. At the State University, by contrast, only 30% of students were regular Church-goers; C. Testa: Giovani '70 inchiesta sulla condizione giovanile in Italia, Apes (Rome, 1969) quoted by L. Tomasi, La contestazione religiosa giovanile, pp. 77-79. Although opinion surveys are notoriously inaccurate, this survey suggests a picture of a relative continuity; there is a marginal decline in Church attendance compared with 1966. Oral testimonies of activists suggests that for a sizeable minority there was an abandonment of habitual Church-going.

16. Report of a conference on don Milani, Lotta Continua (6-1-82).

17. Scuola di Barbiana, Lettera di una professoressa (Florence, 1967), pp. 18-19.

18. For example, the problem is central to the work of Francesco Alberoni, who tends to underline the parallels and convergences of religious and political protest movements. Indeed, it can be said that Alberoni himself worked to unify radical Catholic and Marxist ideologies.

19. See Daniel Horowitz, The Italian Labour Movement (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 46-47; for an interesting discussion of this theme, Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883-1896', in History Workshop Journal, 4, Autumn 1977, pp. 5-57.

20. Luigi Manconi, "Comunione e Liberazione: e che fare di 90,000 scouts?" in Ombre Rosse, 11-12, November, 1975, pp. 92-108; F. Garelli, 'Gruppi giovanili ecclesiale', pp. 275-321.

Both Manconi and Garelli argue that Comunione e Liberazione created structures which valorised personal and recreational activities ignored by a more traditional Left-wing politics.

CHAPTER 10: THE STATE UNIVERSITY - THE CONTROL OF TERRITORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW SOCIALITY

Politics as Entertainment

The student movement at the State University ('La Statale') formed in the wake of the occupations at the Catholic University. It did not play a leading role nationally, nor did events at the Statale have a resonance within a specific cultural orbit equivalent to the '*mondo cattolico*'. However, this section of the movement rapidly dominated student politics within Milan. Its influence grew when the national movement was in crisis in the summer of 1968. The particular interest of this case lies in examining how the Statale became so central to the social life of the student movement.

The medical students were the first to occupy their faculty when, in mid February 1968, they took action in protest over overcrowding and the high examination failure rate. A few days later Science, Letters and Law Faculties were occupied. During March, April and May student occupations and police evictions produced a ding-dong battle. At the Cattolica there were seven occupations in 1968-9, and the students at the Statale took action with equal regularity. Moreover, as will be seen in Chapter 11, schools too were swept into the fray. There was no let-up in hostilities in 1968 until the June examinations, which at the Cattolica were presided over by the police. Each confrontation led to an escalation. Fascist attacks and the arrival of students at the gates with police escorts demanding the 'right to study'

led to a militarisation of conflict, especially following the battle of Valle Giulia.[1] On March 25th 1968 street battles broke out involving over a thousand students, when police evicted the occupiers from both the Catholic and State universities. Repression, expulsions and legal action against students provoked campaigns against victimisation, and hardened feelings towards the authorities. Students responded by locking up the rectors of the two universities, and by putting 'reactionary' lecturers on trial. Writing on the walls pointed the accusing finger. For example, a certain Bonicalzi was addressed: 'Bonicalzi, you who love prefabrication, tell us about building speculation'. Graffitti also contained ironic advice to workers on how to go to university: 'Workers, you too can go to university - join the police'.

Whilst the struggle for the control of space was lost at the Cattolica, the students at the Statale managed to assert their hold over their territory. The Cattolica activists were relatively isolated from the bulk of the student body by the time confrontation took a more violent turn. Their most effective and popular methods of struggle involved passive resistance, and they were not sufficiently prepared to do battle for a political autonomy which required the free use of institutional space. Moreover, the authorities at the Cattolica held firm. At the Statale the student movement could count on a broader area of support, and had less scruples about violent action. It was already more politicised in the early stages, due to a history of organisation and activism that was lacking at the Cattolica.

Then the authorities of the Statale were more ready to accept incursions on their prerogatives rather than have more conflict. The students at the Statale effectively made the university into a base for the movement, but their success needs also to be related to their exploitation of its topographical centrality. The Ospedale Maggiore site, which has formed the core of university since its foundation in 1924, is in the centre of Milan. It is five minutes walk from Piazza Duomo, where political and trade union rallies historically follow on from marches through the city streets. The student movement quickly transformed the nearby Piazza San Stefano into its place for meetings and rallies. Students from all the educational institutions came to the Piazza, and to the university for city-wide demonstrations, debates or to coordinate strikes and protest action. When the Statale students occupied the buildings others joined them and helped repel attacks.

However, the attractions of the State university were not only political in a narrow sense. Occupations provided excellent opportunities for an exciting social life including free rock and jazz concerts. A Corriere della Sera report entitled the 'Nights of Mao' give a voyeuristic insight into the carnival atmosphere which reigned during an occupation of the Statale;

> 'this is how the pro-Chinese ('filo-cinesi') elements pass the hours of the cultural revolution - they play poker, dress up in lecturers' robes, use crucifixes as weapons, listen to Bach and make toasts with wine from Puglia.'(2)

Indeed, an important part of the new politics was precisely these sorts of taboo-breaking acts. Hardly a statue escaped mockery - white marble was desacrated by colourful daubs, heads acquired hats and inscriptions were 'corrected'. And, unfortunately, students also left their mark on their surroundings by destroying and vandalising it. The fine Renaissance courtyards and Della Robbia sculptures suffered considerable damage.

The State University, at the height of the student movement, afforded numerous opportunities for entertainment, and drew crowds of young people looking for excitement and wanting to see for themselves what the press had made so notorious. The buildings and courtyards, which had been taken over for educational purposes, once again teemed with a sort of life it had known in previous centuries. The university took on some of the features of a market-place and hostel. Student control over the entrance halls, combined with the free flow of persons in and out of the buildings, made them ideal spots for trading and illicit dealing. Most of the goods on sale consisted of books, newspapers and other political paraphenalia, but itinerant street-vendors, mostly Southerners, also came to sell their contraband cigarettes, watches and other things, whilst students themselves made and sold jewellery and leather articles. Sometimes the vendors showed a rare eye for a captive market; before each clash with the police, a small cart would suddenly appear loaded with lemons, which students would use to diminish the effects of the teargas. Students turned the university into

a hostel for the poor and needy, who spontaneously gravitated to a place where they would not only get free meals at the canteen and a roof for the night, but where they would be humoured by their hosts. Well-known city drunks and even patients escaping from mental asylums drifted around the university.(3)

For students the cobbled streets adjoining the university contained good quality cheap restaurants and several bars, which they continuously frequented. One of the favourite student places was the Strippoli in Piazza San Stefano, which had excellent food and wine from Puglia. But it was the atmosphere that gave it life, and made it like one of the old fashioned '_osteria_', which had all but disappeared from Milan. In fact, the whole area around the university was transformed by the presence of the student movement. Expectation hung in the air. News concerning the movement travelled down the wires of a bush-telegraph run by networks of activists. Bits of information would be exchanged in the entrance hall to the university, whilst posters on the walls just outside announced the next demonstration or meeting. At the Strippoli there would perhaps be discussion of recent events. All in all, there was a feeling that to be at the Statale was to be at the centre of action, even when the air was clear of teargas and the screams of sirens.

Changing Social Relations

The State university in Milan became a centre of a new form of sociality. The idea of 'fraternity' was no doubt

idealised within the movement, but it nonetheless pointed to an aspiration which tended to broaden the possibilities for social exchange.(4) This has already been suggested in relation to the changes in dress and appearance - changes which facilitated social and political identification. It was also indexed by changes in linguistic usage.(5) The familiar '_tu_' form of address (the little used English equivalent being 'thou') was widely adopted within the movement for all exchanges, whereas previously it would not have been used except when addressing a friend, close acquaintance or member of family. This deliberate informality, which was associated with popular traditions, served to dispense with what were regarded as 'bourgeois' distinctions between people, whilst the withdrawal of courteous forms of address such as the use of titles ('_Dottore_' etc) was a way of snubbing authority-figures. The movement, moreover, created its own peculiar slang ('_gergo_'). This was a strange mixture of swear-words and political jargon, which was later dubbed '_sinistrese_' (Left-talk).(6) It had none of the richness of an argot, and it bore the imprint of educational institutions in which it was formed, especially in its more verbose and sententious manifestations. However, like the slogan shouted on the demonstration, this slang gave a sense of group identity, but was not exclusive in that it was easily picked up.(7) Thus, joining the movement was made easy even for outsiders; it was sufficient that they learnt a smattering of its terminology for them to be able to engage others in conversation. Above all, it was a sociality based

in political activity and discussion, and relied on the most public of vocabularies.

The new sociality produced through the student movement was more extensive than that which preceded it. The activist was at the centre of an intricate web of social relations. A woman student who was at the State University in 1969 recalls that her diary contained the numbers and addresses of some three hundred people she had met through the movement, the great majority of whom she thought of as her friends. For her it was a period of happiness because 'you were at home everywhere in the city'. Moreover, activists travelled frequently from city to city to attend conferences and demonstrations, and went to Paris, Berlin and other centres of the student movement. Telephone calls through the Interfaculty Information Centres maintained regular contacts. It was a sociality that was made possible by the time and freedoms enjoyed by students, but in turn that time was organised into a relentless timetable of commitments. The interests of the collectivity were made to prevail over those of individual. Above all there was an idea of "solidarity" informing social relations. This meant that demonstrations could be organised with lightning speed. A series of telephone calls, a roneoed leaflet and a crowd of several thousand could be gathered to protest outside the San Vittorio prison against arrests which had occurred a couple of hours previously.(8)

The student movement made sociality more public by channeling it through political activity, and in the process

deeply affected the private and personal lives of its protagonists. Its ideal of how a 'comrade' should aspire to live was represented in the oft quoted words of Che Guevara:

> 'Marxists must be the most courageous and the most complete human beings, but always and above all things, they ... must live and pulsate with the masses ... They must be tireless workers, who give themselves utterly to the people, and sacrifice their hours of rest, their families and even their lives for the revolution, yet they are never indifferent to the warmth of human contact.'(9)

This heroic model, which closely resembles Jesus Christ's conception of the apostolic mission, had a considerable resonance in the student movement. There was a streak of fanaticism about the militant's life-style. People were judged according to their political identities or their degree of commitment to the movement. A person was either a 'comrade' or not; and if not, they were excluded or marginalised from the activist's social circles, which were constructed largely on the basis of political activity. Thus, during 1968-9 many friendships which antedated the movement, and many family relationships went into crisis. It was an embarrassment to have a relationship with a 'revisionist' (a member of the Communist Party), and there was a reaction against parents, especially when they were wealthy or held conservative views. Although there were a variety of factors involved, such as teenage rebellion against fathers, it is notable that these conflicts were

thought in a political framework.[10]

The student movement not only rejected certain traditional forms of sociality (mostly those premised on hierarchy and authority), but it gave rise to alternative models and experiments, which liberally interpreted Che Guevara's injunctions. The examples of the commune and of attitudes to sexual liberation offer some insights into these developments.

The most celebrated commune to be established in Milan came out of the occupation of the State University's student hostel ('Casa dello Studente') in May 1969. A meeting called for free beds, the extension of services for women students, the evaluation of requests for lodging on the basis of need rather than merit and job security for all staff. The action led to almost total student control over the premises.[11] However, most students lived with their parents in Milan, so communal living was a marginal experience, especially for those attending the Cattolica. There was no equivalent to the US or British campuses. Moreover, by contrast with the North American movements, the few communal houses shared by activists served mainly as bases for other activities.[12] Little time was spent at home, little space was left for private, personal relationships. The prevalent idea was that everything had to be shared.

Sex too was thought to be something to be shared among comrades. Free love and sexual liberation were facets of the student movement in Italy as in other countries. It was, likewise, a contradictory freedom. A leaflet written by Education students at the Statale gives a slightly

confused picture of this:

> 'talking about freedom and revolution without living them in our everyday lives leads to fascism ... That means to say, that for women, if they don't 'masculinise' themselves along authoritarian lines, nothing remains but the task of duplicating, of being the 'duplicating angel' ('angelo del ciclostile') ... The system wants us not to make love ... The bourgeoisie is not interested in the creation of a new relationship between men and women because it would lead to self-immolation.'(13)

Criticism was also directed against the authoritarian and repressive aspects of the Chinese Revolution such as 'the repeated invitations to marriage, maternity and chastity, that is to the prohibition on the rational self-management of one's life'. The leaflet celebrates love-making as anti-authoritarian and anti-bourgeois, but it also suggests that women were being squeezed between older and newer forms of oppression. The vogue for Reichian ideas reinforced those tendencies within a student way of life which exalted self-expressivity.

The idea of sexual liberation was spoken of positively by both men and women in the student movement, but it was often experienced at the time as unpleasant, especially by the women.(14) They were obliged by social pressures to give freely of themselves. During occupations sexual intercourse was actively canvassed, and the women, who were always in a minority, found it difficult to say 'no' for fear of appearing 'repressed'. Within the movement, masculine values, such as the courage and daring of a Mario Capanna in the face of the police, and the masculine image, exemplified

by the virile, bearded look, were hegemonic among men.[15] It was the men who were the leaders, and women students were required to dress and behave like them in order to win respect; otherwise they tended to be glamorous appendages of the male leaders ('la donna del leader'). The women activists continued to do the humbler tasks of duplicating and preparing meals. Their role in the movement was subordinate and invisible. The specific nature of women's oppression remained unrecognised; so whilst students were intensely aware of class discrimination and inequalities in education, they were largely oblivious to both the public and private humiliations endured by women as a social group.[16]

The new sociality brought into existence by the student movement was, therefore, a contradictory mixture of freedoms and oppressions. Participation involved extending circles of friendship and breaking down the barriers between people of different ages and classes; at the same time, friendships were circumscribed by political definitions and confused with the category 'comrade'. Public life became more intense, but at the expense of personal concerns. Interpretations of freedom, fraternity and equality claimed to be in the interests of all, but they reaffirmed male powers to define social relations. The repressive and moralistic elements of the new sociality came to the fore when the movement went into decline.

At the Statale the student movement succeeded in maintaining its grip on the institution, which functioned

as the headquarters for the movement as a whole. However, at the end of 1969, the movement was subordinated to the newly founded political organisations of the Extraparliamentary Left, which replaced the loose structures of grass-roots democracy with their versions of Leninist democratic centralism. The most regressive and repressive elements of the new sociality were formalised and institutionalised by the political sects. At the Statale the Movimento Studentesco (now a party) fought tooth and nail to drive out rivals, and to establish the supremacy of Marxist-Leninist dogma and organisation; it even resurrected Stalin as 'the symbol of intransigent struggle against the bourgeoisie and fascism, as the rejection of the line of the Western Communist Parties, and as part of the fight against Trotskyism'.(17) Although the Movimento Studentesco was perhaps an extreme example of political puritanism, it nonetheless represented wider tendencies that developed out of the movements of 1968-9. Above all, it entailed the construction of a closed political subculture in which narrow political definitions governed the social existence of its members. A Movimento Studentesco document makes this clear, by posing an alternative for school students between a life of militancy and the escapism of bohemianism:

> 'it is not surprising that the bourgeoisie favours a false anti-conformism ... comics, detective stories, television, the guitar and long-hair are for many young people the only form of social and cultural existence. Through these instruments, the bourgeois ideology of violence ... pansexualism and escapism is transmitted'.(18)

However, in the wake of the movements there was also a reaction to this new conformism, especially among women and youth, who struggled to assert identities which the Left and student politics had repressed or refused to recognise. Tiny minorities anticipated these developments in a confused way in 1968-9, but they were isolated and marginalised. As will be shown in Part 5, it was not until the development of the new social movements in the 1970's that the theme of 'personal' and 'sexual' identities was explored and used to redefine 'politics' itself.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 10

1. The phenomenon of the Right wing reaction among students to the student movement has not been studied, but was an important ingredient of events. Fascists used a range of violent methods to provoke police intervention and to discredit the Left. They invented their own small scale 'strategy of tension'.

2. Corriere della Sera (10-3-68).

3. Lists of the arrested in clashes include a sprinkling of the 'outside agitators' beloved of the Corriere della Sera; on one occasion these included "an actor from Turin, a worker and a designer" (Corriere della Sera, 2-6-68).
I'm grateful here to Antonia Torchi for her illuminating recollection of her student days.

4. Social movements create the conditions for a more "disorderly life", which Richard Sennett has described as a positive feature of the '60's experiences: "I believe the freedom to accept and live in disorder represents the goal which this generation has aimed for, vaguely and inchoately, in its search for community"; Richard Sennett, The Uses of Disorder (London, 1971), p. 12.

5. For a discussion of how language in Italy has historically been a field of political and cultural conflicts, see Anna Laura Lepschy and Giulio Lepschy, The Italian Language Today (London, 1979), pp. 19-40.

6. For example: 'Angelo del ciclostile', 'autocritica', 'cazzate', 'corretto', 'gestione', 'illuministico', 'impegno', 'livello di scontro', 'militarza', 'obiettivamente', 'opportunismo', 'struttura e sovrastruttura', "Verità è rivoluzionaria"; see Paolo Flores d'Arcais, Sinistrese: dizionario dei luoghi comuni della sinistra (Milan, 1978). But it is important to distinguish between the moment when the "language" was invented (i.e. an aspect of the identity-formation of the social movement), and its subsequent degeneration into a new conformism.

7. Patrizia Violi, I giornali dell'estrema sinistra (Milan, 1977), pp. 1-17.

8. Antonia Torchi interview (1982). To map and work out the dynamics of the social exchanges it would be interesting to apply the "network analysis" of social anthropologists; see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society (London, 1952); and J. Barnes, 'Class and Communities in a Norwegian Parish', in Human Relations, 1, 1954. For a fascinating use of these approaches, see E. Beltrami et al, Relazioni sociali e strategie individuali in ambiente urbano: Torino nel novecento (Turin, 1982).

9. Luciano A guzzi, Un liceo, un luogo di lotta (Milan, 1976), p. 295.

10. Richard Sennett deals interestingly with what he calls, the problem of constructing a 'theory of expression in public', asking such questions as: "is there a difference in the expression appropriate for public relations and that appropriate for intimate relations?" He traces the history of how the balance between public and private spheres and the concommittant importance of 'acting' was destroyed in the 19th century; how, that is, the public (including the political) was invested with "expressive meaning" and people's actions were thereby judged to show their inner characteristics. This in turn produced a puritan desire to authenticate the self. R. Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York, 1977) especially pp. 10-24. Whereas Sennett addresses the American crisis in which public interactions were converted into a reflection of the individual psyche, this crisis in Italy appeared in reverse. However, in both instances, social identities were spoken of as "expressions" of the self, and the search to "authenticate" the self left little room for acceptance of diversities.

11. L'Unità (10-5-69).

12. Colin Webster, 'Communes', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson, Resistance through Rituals (London, 1976).

13. Lettere, documento studenti insegnanti (February, 1968).

14. Obligatory reading were the exchanges between Clara Zetkin, Alexandra Kollontai and Lenin on the subject of free love. Lenin's puritanism was much mocked.

15. An index of this is the way homosexual behaviour was regarded as un-manly and incurred social disapproval. Reichian ideas served to reinforce traditional heterosexuality, and to uphold the definition of homosexuality as a "sickness"; see 'Contro Reich', in Angelo Pezzana (Ed.), Fuori: politica del corpo (Rome, 1976).

16. Mariella Gramaglia, "1968: il venir dopo e l'andar oltre il movimento femminista", in Problemi del socialismo, 4, 1976, p. 196.
See Part 5, Chapter 25 pp. 541-542.

17. Luisa Cortese, Il movimento studentesco - storia e documenti: 1968-73 (Milan, 1973), p. 156.

Marxist-Leninist currents had been present in the student movement since its early days along with other Marxist heresies. When the Corriere della Sera saw "cinesi" under every bed, it was representing a whole movement in caricature. There were, however, some student groupings who lived up to this image. L'Unione dei Comunisti, for example, held "red weddings", and aped much of the ethico-religious language of Counter-Reformation Catholicism; for an analysis of its paper Servire il Popolo, see Patrizia Violi, I giornali della sinistra, pp. 45-67.

18. Ibid., pp. 96-7.

CHAPTER 11: REVOLT IN THE UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

On January 26th 1968 the students of the '*liceo* Berchet' occupied their school with the help of city-wide support from university and secondary school students. A month later the '*liceo* Parini' was occupied and the structures were set up, through meetings at the Statale, of a Milanese 'co-ordination' for the 'Movimente delle Scuole Medie'. The movement spread to all the main upper secondary schools, firstly to the '*liceo classico*' and '*liceo scientifico*', and subsequently to the technical institutes and vocational training schools. The movement started in Milan, but quickly assumed national proportions with a wave of occupations, demonstrations, strikes in the spring and then in the autumn. Whilst the student movement in the universities went into eclipse, it put down its roots in the schools.

Unlike in the universities, where students were recognised to be 'citizens' with the right to speak, meet and organise politically, in the secondary schools there were heavy restrictions on such activities. Some student associations and publications existed, but under close supervision. An authoritarian *régime* prevailed in the majority of schools. One of the movement's central objectives was precisely the recognition of school students' adulthood and citizenship. This was true not only in the earlier stages of mobilisation, but throughout the struggle with the rigid and intransigent authorities.

Even before the student movement gathered momentum in the universities, a major scandal blew up in a Milanese *liceo* over the issue of freedom of speech, and provoked a national debate. Students at the *liceo* Parini published an article in their paper, *La Zanzara*, on changing attitudes towards sex among their fellow pupils which provoked protests from some parents. A police inquiry resulted in arrests.(1) The article itself was in the form of a report on the findings of a questionnaire asking about sex before marriage, contraception and divorce. It reflected tendencies in favour of women's equality in sexual relations and careers. It criticised the Church's role in defining social relations in terms of the 'natural' and 'unnatural', and for causing a 'sense of guilt' about sex. One reply called for 'total sexual freedom and a total change of attitudes', but the overall perspective was one of bringing Italian education in line with the 'majority of civilised countries' and forwarding 'democratic development'.(2) The reaction it provoked was one of 'moral panic', especially in the Catholic establishment and in the *Procura*; the prosecution evoked the spectre of an 'Americanisation' of Italian youth:

> 'The sexual problem must be scientifically dealt with or we will reach a situation in which the girls will go around with contraceptives in their pockets and a sleeping-bag under their arms ... I am speaking on the behalf of the sane society, the healthy society.'(3)

In response to the threat, the article of the Fascist penal code on 'crimes of opinion' ('*reato d'opinione*') was used

against the editors of La Zanzara. Camilla Cederna, writing in the enlightened middle class weekly L'Espresso, observed how in Italian society 'the mechanisms (of repression) are unloosed when the taboo areas of sex and family, and hierarchy and army are touched.'(4)

What emerges clearly from the Zanzara case is the rigidity of the institutions when faced with criticism. The authorities did their best to keep schools free of what they saw as the dangerous influences at large in society. For them, the school was a bastion of civilised values against the onslaught of a new barbarism. When there were strikes by students at the liceo Galvani in 1966, the headmaster issued a statement:

> 'The abstentions from lessons are bitter, and episodes which are neither justifiable nor acceptable. In the school there must be a relationship of trust, respect and confidence, a dialogue between pupils and teachers. These conditions enable the young to freely inform their superiors of the wants, hopes, doubts and difficulties which they come across in their school life.'(5)

But it was just this paternalistism which the students found so repugnant. Attempts to punish and repress in cases when 'dialogue' broke down only provoked further disaffection. The Zanzara incident, for example, led to petitions, demonstrations and mass attendance of the trial. The school was made into a political battleground. Students demanded that:

> 'the school should be thought of and organised not so much as preparation for society, but as part of society.

> The school should not be a place for listening but for active participation.'(6)

The language of a student report denouncing censorship in schools published in 1967 is full of words like 'growth', 'maturity', 'democracy', 'participation in civil life'; these indicate a commitment to rights and responsibilities, which show the extent to which students were influenced by a 'political culture' from which this vocabulary derived. But the cultural life inside the upper secondary schools was not always so respectable.

During the mid to late 1960's '_liceo_' students were reading existentialist literature (Sartre, Camus) and Pavese novels. There was a cultural climate in which the 'rebel', the 'outsider', the 'loner' were the heroes who rejected respectable and bourgeois society. Radicals and anarchists organised meetings against the Concordat and the Vietnam War, before 1968. Anti-authoritarian ideas and behaviour, stimulated by the youth culture imported from Britain and the United States, were fashionable before they became aspects of the student movement. Students wore long hair and baited the authorities with disrespectful behaviour.(7)

In January 1968 students of Milan's upper secondary schools and institutes occupied their buildings and carried on a struggle against authoritarianism just as did the university students. Often strikes were coordinated throughout the city's educational institutions. Formal structures to organise the movement's activities were created in the wake of spontaneous sympathetic action. When on

March 7th 1968 police evicted students occupying six schools, the next day 10,000 students struck in protest.(8) However, it was not until the autumn that the movement spread from the most active schools to involve the majority of institutions. On November 28th 10,000 school students demonstrated for political rights, and every day brought news of an occupation or picket.(9)

The movement's objectives were summed up in a leaflet of the Action Committee of the liceo Berchet as follows:

> 'the control and elimination of marks and failures, and therefore the destruction of selection processes in school; the right of everyone to education and to a guaranteed student grant; freedom to hold meetings; a general meeting in the morning; accountability of teachers to students; removal of all reactionary and authoritarian teachers; setting of the curriculum from below.'(10)

To gain these objectives, the leaflet concluded that it was necessary to unite with the working class, since to 'change the school society must be changed'. The demands that were felt to be the most important, and around which students mobilised, concerned political rights and the 'autonomy' of the movement within the institutions. They were also the questions which could be acted on directly; thus meetings were held in school-hours, papers were produced and students came and went from school and class when they wanted to - all without prior permission. Mass disobedience unhinged the normal methods of exercising authority in the class-room and school. In the celebrated case of the liceo Parini, the head, Mattalia, tried to open a dialogue with the students

who had occupied the school in March 1968. For his pains, he was suspended by the Minister of Education, who ordered the police to repossess the premises. The resort to police intervention in response to "illegal" student meetings, the suspension and expulsion of activists and attempts to evoke parental support for the restoration of order - all these measures intensified the students' campaign for political rights.(11) When in October 1968 students at the liceo Einstein were suspended, 1,300 out of the 1,700 students went on protest strike.(12)

The movement in the schools rapidly developed its own organisation, which started in the class and extended to the city-wide coordinating body. As in the universities, the key unit was the general meeting. A statute of the Cattaneo technical institute sets out the standard organisational structure; the general meeting was the sovereign body, and from it were elected commissions and study groups with special functions. Thus, there was a press commission, an administrative commission and so on, and study groups on subjects decided by the general meeting. Each class had a monthly meeting to plan and decide on teaching questions. There was also a paper, which was directly accountable to the general meeting.(13) So, far from being an echo of the university movement or a temporary revolt, the school students' movement established a permanent presence in its own right. The tasks of holding meetings and demonstrations, and of producing leaflets and

distributing them, entailed a whole process of political education that pushed formal education to the margins of many teenage lives. At the same time, the ostensible seriousness of the political literature hid the theatrical and entertainment aspects of student politics. A rare report from a study group admonishes fellow students for their very lack of seriousness about themselves;

> 'it is a paradoxical fact affecting all students that they know how to talk about Dante and Cicero, about Milan and Inter, but they don't know how to talk about their own situation and work. The proof of this is that in certain moments meetings are made into a hell-hole. People shout and clap as if in a stadium.'(14)

The ideas of anti-authoritarianism and student power gave legitimacy and new meaning to a whole traditional repertoire of informal resistances in the class-room. Thus absenteeism or the 'playing up' of teachers took political forms and came to signify the refusal of 'bourgeois ideas'.

Although the school student movement privileged the fight for political rights, and was obliged to by the recalcitrance of the authorities, it also thought in terms of alternative methods of learning. A report to the general meeting of the Giorgi technical institute, for example, made four proposals. It called for group work, greater student-teacher co-operation, joint meetings and group meetings with teachers to decide the assessment of marks. As in the case of the universities, great importance was attached to collective work as opposed to individual competitiveness, and cooperation was seen as an end, and not just as a means. Marks were therefore regarded as a divisive instrument of

social control from above that had to be neutralised by collective pressure, and then dispensed with.[15] In part, this strategy complemented the fight for political rights because it sought to protect the individual and the group from discrimination in the class-room, and to prevent reprisals against those dedicating time to the movement instead of to their own studies. But it also sprang from a desire to put useful knowledge and real learning before institutional requirements. There was widespread opposition to compulsory Latin and religious studies, and interest in making other subjects 'relevant'.

The idea of alternative learning was especially significant in the '_liceo_' and technical institutes in 1968-9 because education was regarded as potentially positive and liberating. Hence students campaigned to make the institutions accessible and relevant to everyone. These relatively privileged students looked ahead to further study in the university and could expect to get work without too much difficulty. In other words, there was not yet that pessimism about the point of studying because of lack of job prospects. The late '60's was a prosperous period. However, attempts to develop alternative educational practices foundered in difficult institutional circumstances. Apart from the hostility of the authorities, students lacked the support of sympathetic teachers, who were indispensable to any viable strategy for transforming the educational process within schools. Such teachers were usually isolated individuals. There was little unionisation, (not counting

the professional associations), and no strong network of radical teachers. In fact, it took the student movement to create a generation of teachers committed to more democratic and egalitarian methods.[16] As a consequence, alternative study proved delusory and students adopted a cynical, instrumental approach to their studies; activists channelled their energies into political mobilisation outside the class-room. These tendencies were aggravated by the university movement's decline in late 1968, and the domination of the movement by the organisations of the New Left.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 11

1. G. Nozzoli and P. M. Paoletti, La Zanzara (Milan, 1966), p. 11.

2. Ibid., pp. 159-167.

3. Ibid., p. 72.

4. Ibid., pp. 71-2. In January 1968 there was renewed trouble over school student papers when the headmaster of the 'Berchet' liceo took disciplinary action against students for articles they had written (Corriere della Sera 27-1-68).

5. Libro bianco sulle associazioni e i giornali studenteschi medi di Milano (Milan, 1966), p. 81.

6. Ibid., this is a quotation from Franco Salvo, Dalla Magna Carta alla Costituzione Italiano.

7. Luciano Aguzzi, Un liceo: un luogo di lotta (Milan, 1976), p. 63.

8. L'Unità (9-3-68).

9. L'Unità (30-11-68).

10. Comitato d'Azione, Il Berchet, 30th October, 1968.

11. Guido Viale, Il sessantotto, p. 64; and Emilio Samek Ludovici, 'Il movimento insegnanti a Milano' in Inchiesta, 3 (summer), 1971, p. 39.

12. L'Unità (11-10-68).

13. Cattaneo, Statuto per l'Assemblea, January 1969.

14. Liceo Volta, leaflet (undated).

15. Relazione Riguardante gli Argomenti Discussi nella Prima Assemblea, ITI G. Giorgi (undated).

16. It has been written that the Italian school movement was much weaker than that in France in the same period because of the relative absence of radical teachers. A movement grew up among teachers (especially among young Catholics in Milan) and established several hundred adherents in 1969, but it did not succeed in introducing a viable strategy for change within the class-room; see Emilio Samek Ludovici, 'Il movimento insegnanti a Milano', pp. 38-53.

CHAPTER 12: THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AFTER '68

The student movement's impact on Italian society was considerable. It 'showed the country a different image of itself and socialised knowledge of how that society worked'.(1) But the effects were most deeply felt in the social groups and institutions with which students were in closest contact. It was not factory workers so much as teachers, the liberal professions, publishers and researchers who were directly challenged by the movement, and whose ranks were subsequently joined by ex-student activists. But first of all it was the education system which felt the impact of the student movement.

The student movement's effects on the educational system can be judged by asking the questions: 'Did it make education more democratic and egalitarian?'; 'did the movement change who entered further educational institutions, what students did inside them, and what qualifications they got on completing their studies?'. Finally, it will be asked whether the movement changed how the very concepts of education and schooling were understood. The effects will be considered, in other words, in relation to access to further education, the nature and control of the learning process, and to the forms of qualification obtained in the institutions. The more general question about changing conceptions of intellectuality will be examined in Chapter 14 in terms of the student movement's impact on intellectual and cultural roles in society.(2)

The student movement's first important campaigns were over access to the universities. It proclaimed everyone's right to study and symbolically opened the gates of the faculties to all-comers, and welcomed workers to participate in seminars, discussions and meetings. Students demanded the establishment of the 'mass university', meaning a university open to the 'masses'. In their campaign they won the propaganda-war against a government which held out the promise of education as a right, but then reneged on it. The PCI and the unions were won into opposing the Gui reforms, but ultimately the wave of student occupations made it impossible for the government to limit the numbers able to study in the universities. However, the student victory was limited. Students exercised a veto in the name of a general principle, but they did not undermine some of the immediately resolvable social and economic causes which lay behind inequalities of access. Firstly, although the movement resisted increases in fees, it did not campaign systematically for student grants. The winning of a living grant would have allowed poorer students to study full-time without having to do other jobs, and would have allowed access to those whose families could not afford to support their children's further education. In addition, financial independence could have released students from dependency on the family. However, the movement did not seriously take up the issue because, in its eyes, the demand smacked of a narrow economic corporativism (perhaps because the leading activists were mainly drawn from middle class families they were less concerned about financial difficulties).

Secondly, the movement did not propose legislative reforms that would facilitate access to the universities. Its anti-reformism and anti-parliamentary politics precluded such a strategy. In other words, the movement rejected a statist orientation that was a necessary part of any moves to make what were State institutions more accessible. This rejection also had negative effects on the attempt to democratise the upper secondary school. A reform bill of 1967 which proposed to open these schools to everyone and to raise the school-leaving age to sixteen was brushed aside by the student movement.(3)

The movement therefore managed to win tactical victories, but not to open up further education to the working class. The 'élite university' was transformed into a 'mass university' in that student numbers increased five-fold from 1965 to 1979, to reach nearly a million. However, the percentage of students from working class backgrounds increased by only a small amount, and remained lower than in other industrialised countries with quota-systems. Moreover, the privileged route to the university via the upper secondary school remained intact.(4)

The impact of the student movement was more dramatic in relation to life within the educational institutions. There was no return to a pre-1968 situation either in the teaching and studying methods or in the political relations between the students and authorities. Not that there were no attempts to put the clock back. A right wing government in 1972 carried out a harsh law and order campaign; in an interview Giovanni Gozzer estimated that in a period of

three months 1,200 schools, institutes and universities had been occupied, and that the conflict resulted in 10,000 disciplinary proceedings, 300 arrests and the resignation of 38 headmasters.(5) However, most of the demands for a new pedagogy made by the movement in the universities were conceded. Examinations were adapted to student needs rather than vice versa; written (as opposed to oral) examinations and certain subjects were no longer compulsory; attendance was no longer checked; seminars and collective study were introduced. The education process was liberalised to allow greater student participation. Similarly, students in the upper secondary schools as well as in the universities were conceded political rights. At first these were informal, but in 1974 they were written into a charter of rights, which created elected representative bodies in the schools.

The students' successes in undermining traditional authority structures and in establishing grass-roots democracy within the institutions were remarkable. They showed the power of a substitutionalist strategy in action. Students set up counter-courses involving collective and interdisciplinary study, and then called for them to be recognised. They held meetings and opened the doors to outsiders without requesting permission from above. In doing so they questioned the whole nature of the educational process as it was constituted within the institutions. The movement challenged divisions created or sanctioned by past statist educational practices, such as those which induced competitive relationships between students or those which separated schooling from other social and

political activities. However, the movement's substitutionalism also carried severe limitations.

Firstly, the enormous energy expended by the movement in encouraging educational 'self-activity' by students could not last indefinitely. It could not make up for the structural problems arising from overcrowding, lack of investment and absence of post graduate research possibilities. If anything, these difficulties were aggravated by the increase of student numbers and the resistance to change on the part of powerful vested interests. Secondly, the movement's substitutionalism rapidly led to a narrow and instrumental politicisation of educational processes. This was evident in the movement's fascination with the ideas of the Chinese Cultural Revolution which drew sharp distinctions between 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian' culture. Luciano Aguzzi cites a case when subjects were divided into three categories according to political criteria. Greek and Latin were classed as 'pre-bourgeois remnants'; History was 'purely ideological'; Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Philosophy were 'indirectly ideological'. The abolition of History was proposed in preference for studying the present.(6) This example is especially crude, but most analyses assumed that the educational institutions were functional to the capitalist system in some simple sense. Ideological certainties substituted empirical inquiry. Students fought a propaganda battle in which slogans substituted for study, or they left further education in search of 'real knowledge' learnt in general political struggles.

The liberalisation of studies within the universities and schools produced interesting experiments, especially where genuine cooperation was developed between students and teachers. In Milan, the Architecture Faculty of the Polytechnic was a good example of this, as was the Political Science Faculty of the State University.(7) However, the potential of alternative courses and methods of study remained largely unrealised. An account by a teacher in Milan gives a dismal picture of developments in upper secondary schools:

> 'the slogan we all shouted in '68 'Smash, don't change the bourgeois school' has done the student movement more harm than the Christian Democrat Ministers of Education themselves.'(8)

Too often student demands concerning education served short-term laziness rather than radical objectives. Or rather, a refusal to 'be educated' was interpreted simplistically as a radical political act in itself. An account from a student journal, Le Formiche Rosse (The Red Ants), celebrates this form of insubordination:

> 'It's when you prefer to go out and smoke a cigarette and talk about your problems that you discover that all the other students are there too ... Occasionally the headmaster passes and sends everyone back into the class-room ... Do you then have to follow the lesson? No. You only need to enter the room to see that only a few arse-lickers are paying attention and ... that the rest are reading the paper or talking about sport.'(9)

The effect of this sort of action, according to Aguzzi, was to make the school an 'empty box' which served only to waste time in. Far from having radical political consequences,

this student resistance reinforced social inequalities in the distribution of cultural capital.

Although different because of its political language, this attitude to school (and to the hard-working student) closely parallels the pupil resistance in British schools observed by Paul Willis. Similarly, the opposition of the students to mental work expresses a class antagonism and critique of relations of authority, which simultaneously reproduces relations of subordination. Willis writes:

> 'Mental work demands too much, and encroaches ... too much those areas which are increasingly adopted as their own, as private and independent. 'The lads' have learned only too well the specific form of mental labour is an unfair 'equivalent' in an exchange about control of those parts of themselves which they want to be free ... Resistance to mental work becomes resistance to authority learnt in school. The specific conjunction in contemporary capitalism of class antagonism and the educational paradigm turns education into control, (social) class resistance into educational refusal and human difference into class division.'(10)

Aguzzi treats this educational refusal as an aberration resulting from a 'bad' politics, but it needs also to be understood in Willis' terms. It was a refusal which in the mid and late '70's connected up with a refusal of work and the development of a youth movement.(11)

Finally the student movement's effects on the educational system need to be related to the forms of qualification obtained in the institutions. Again, the movement's successes were double-edged. In the upper secondary schools it played a major role in making it difficult for

teachers to fail students. The struggle against selection processes ended in the virtual elimination of examinations, which became mere formalities. The failure rate dropped dramatically.[12] This had the positive result of making it possible for more students to go on to university, but was negative in that no new forms of assessment were established to enable students and teachers to evaluate performance and aid learning without resorting to discrimination. In the universities it also became easier for students to acquire a degree, but these steadily lost their value both in the eyes of employers and of the students themselves.[13]

The overall impact of the student movement on the education system in Italy turned out to be negative in as far as the institutions showed themselves incapable of responding positively. On the surface it appeared more democratic and egalitarian due to the destruction of authoritarian forms of selection and social control, and the absence of a quota system. Yet the class inequalities survived. For example, only the children of the middle classes could afford the years of study needed to become a doctor or engineer. So far, attention has been drawn particularly to the shortcomings of the movement itself in developing an adequate strategy for transforming education. Above all, it has been pointed out that its refusal to make demands and campaign for substantial reforms had debilitating consequences. It entailed isolating other social groups from participation in changing education and it enabled the government and educational authorities to avoid taking action, thereby

protecting vested interests. The movement's creative substitutionalism was defeated by the sheer weight of structural obstacles and because it did not connect up with wider educational transformations. However, to attribute responsibility to the student movement for not reforming the educational system would be to overlook the role played by those with the power to make such changes.

Giorgio Ruffolo writes that:

> 'the Italian ruling classes' response to the students' revolt accorded with 'a time-honoured and happy-go-lucky tradition of making paltry concessions rather than genuine changes; instead of building more schools and extending participation, the government offered some more grants and easier examinations.'(14)

The concession of the 150 Hours scheme, which facilitated paid study leave for workers lacking in basic educational qualifications, was perhaps a partial exception; it was the most innovative reform in the education field of the 1970's. It demonstrated what possibilities for change were open if the intelligence and organisation of social movements were given space, time and money to develop.(15) The scheme promised to release educational practices from their imprisonment in the formal schooling system, and to create an alternative to the either/or between statist and substitutionalist options. The roles of student and teacher too were put in question.(16) However, the scheme also served less idealistic purposes. It was designed to make up for the inadequacies of the schooling system, and this was a way of doing it cheaply (especially via employment of part-time teachers). Furthermore, the scheme was isolated

and marginalised rather than used as a spring-board for changing the educational system.[17] Otherwise, during the 1970's the schools and universities were mainly left to rot.

Attempts at reform were swallowed up in the quick-sands of corporate interests. The impasse of the political system was paralleled in the place-seeking and time-serving of academia. The average student in the universities rarely attended courses, and the notion that further education was a 'parking-area' for the future unemployed signalled a cynical awareness of the devaluation of qualifications on the labour market. The student movement of 1968 perhaps created a unique opportunity to carry out systematic reforms against the interests of university barons, backward-looking headmasters and teaching staff, and a hundred-and-one petty feudalites. Its defeat meant that the situation which generated the social conflicts in the 1960's got worse. The figure of the unemployed, casually employed or unemployable student became emblematic of the political and cultural crisis of the late 1970's.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 12

1. G. Bechelloni, L'Università introvabile', in Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia, 1, 1977, p. 9.

2. See Richard Johnson, The State and the Politics of Education, pp. 28-9.

3. L. Aguzzi, Scuola, studenti e lotta di classe (Milan, 1976), pp. 56-60.

4. G. Bechelloni, 'L'Università introvabile', pp. 9-18.

5. Giovanni Bianchi (Ed.), Giovani tra classe e generazione (Milan, 1973), p. 27.

6. L. Aguzzi, Scuola, studenti e lotta di classe (Milan, 1976), p. 164.

7. In both instances there was a teaching staff that was sympathetic to the objectives of the student movement, and saw the opportunity to integrate a radical politics with empirical study and research. The case of the sociologists has already been discussed in Part 1 Chapter 1. The architects played an important role in the early 1970's by working with the tenants' movement and opposition to certain urban development schemes; see Ettore Pasculli, Analisi politica delle lotte per la casa a Milano (mimeograph Faculty of Architecture, 1976-77).

8. L. Aguzzi, Un liceo: un luogo di lotta, p. 206. Whilst Luciano Aguzzi was writing as a teacher committed to radical reforms and student participation, the mid '70's saw the emergence of a 'school-life' literary sub-genre which celebrated or denigrated anti-educational attitudes; for a bad example see Vittoria Ronchey, Figlioli miei, marxisti immaginari (Milan, 1975).

9. Quoted in Rosso, December 1973.

10. Paul Willis, Learning to Labour (London, 1977), p. 103.

11. See Part 5, Chapter 24.

12. Luciano Aguzzi writes of a 'liceo scientifico' in Milan where the failure rate dropped from 29% in 1968-9 to 2% in 1974-5. L. Aguzzi, Un liceo: un luogo di lotta, pp. 44-6.

13. Above all, there was a devaluation of educational qualifications because of the excess of supply over demand. The number of graduates required by industry in 1970 was the same as in 1963, although there were many more graduates; Marzio Barbagli, Disoccupazione intellettuale e sistema scolastico in Italia (1859-1973), pp. 345-346.

14. G. Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme, p. 112.

15. For further analysis of the 150 Hours scheme, see Chapter 14, pp. 468-470.

16. Giovanni Gozzer, Rapporto sulla secondaria (Rome, 1973), pp. 5-21.

17. Massimo Negri, Scuola di massa in Europa (Florence, 1975), p. 28; Luciano Aguzzi, Scuola, studenti e lotta di classe, pp. 86-90.

CHAPTER 13: GOING TO THE PEOPLE: WORKER-STUDENT UNITY

The theme of worker-student unity recurred throughout the development of the student movement. Students participated in the vast demonstrations that accompanied the strikes of the early '60's and student politics was predominantly shaped by the organisations and ideologies of the Left. However, the idea of unity was interpreted and acted on in different ways. Three phases can be identified. First, in the early and mid '60's student unity with the working class was mediated through institutions, namely the parties and trade unions, and was conceived as an alliance between different social groups. In the second phase, unity was theorised in terms of a direct, unmediated relationship between the student movement and workers. The notion of alliance was discarded, since it implied differences of interest, and was replaced by an idea of unity based on shared oppressions. Student struggles against educational and State authoritarianism were perceived as parallel to those of workers and against a common enemy. In the third phase, unity came to be interpreted as student mobilisation and organisation against the exploitation and oppression in the factories and workplaces rather than in the universities and schools. This chapter will deal with the theory and practice of student-worker unity in the second and third phases. The focus will be on the student movement and its development, and not on its influence on workers' struggles, which will be considered in Part 4.

During the waves of student occupations at the beginning of 1968, the idea of unity with the working class was continuously reiterated. As has already been written, not only Marxist ideas, but emblems and symbols such as red flags were borrowed from the workers' movement. Students' assertion of their identity through their dress, participation in collective action and pursuit of new social and moral values was done in opposition to the bourgeois norms and in the name of working class ideals. Student perceptions of their objective class position also changed. Either they rejected their privileged backgrounds out of choice, and conceived of a future among the ranks of the wage-earners. Or, alternatively, they interpreted their professional work as a means of destroying privilege from within.

Student documents from the March 1968 occupation of the Statale make frequent reference to the change in students' economic prospects. This feeling was perhaps strongest in the movement in the Humanities Faculty, which was one of the least career-oriented; its programmatic statement read:

> 'Students know that the jobs they will get when they graduate will not be ones of power, but will mean obeying other people's orders.'(1)

A Law Faculty leaflet claimed that only 6% of graduates acceded to the profession, and the rest 'are absorbed by the labour market as lowly paid clerical workers'. Among engineering students only one-fifth were thought to be

likely to get jobs in the profession. A document called the department a "dream factory".(2) Fear of unemployment does not appear much in the student publications, though there is an acute awareness that students were no longer a protected and privileged élite, and that their futures lay more with a working class than a middle class destiny.(3) Thus unity with workers was not thought to be a purely ideological question, though few seriously considered material and social consequences of "proletarianisation". In the heady days of student activism this did not create much anxiety about personal prospects. Calculations about career opportunities were thrown to the winds in preference for living for the moment and for a utopian future.

However, some groups of students looked at their training as a means of putting special skills to the service of the working class. The medical students are an especially interesting example in this respect. They were the first to occupy their faculty at the Statale, which was especially surprising given its predominantly middle class and conservative nature. The Action Committee raised issues concerning students' own situation - it denounced the baronial power structure, the high student-teacher ratio, inadequate facilities and ruthless selection - but it also criticised the organisation of medicine as a social practice. They published a pamphlet, translated from French, which questioned the Left's quantitative approach to health consisting of demands for more medicine and more hospitals. Such demands, it claimed, were based on the acceptance of rigid hierarchies,

narrow definitions of health and on an ideology of scientificity. The pamphlet called instead for an attack on the causes of ill-health (e.g. industrial accidents), for a de-centralisation of services into the community and a diminution of the divisions of labour among health workers.(4) L'Unità reported nearly a year later that during a subsequent occupation of the medical faculty open seminars were held on the theme 'Medicine and Society'. It involved 'study groups with the direct participation of factory workers and the inhabitants of 'quartieri' of Milan', and the discussion of health at work and preventative medicine.(5) The challenge, which started in the university, had extended outwards.

A key notion among medical students was the idea of putting themselves 'at the service of working class'. This entailed providing a service which was not only free but given without the expectation of prestige or honour in return. The idea of 'service' stemmed from the Chinese model of the 'barefoot doctor' and of the intellectual who worked in the fields and learnt from the peasants. According to this approach, it was the workers who had the collective power to improve health conditions by fighting its causes, which were rooted in the capitalist organisation of society. The task of the radical doctor was to increase awareness of the class dimensions of health, and to help people be confident of their judgements. In Turin at the Molinette hospital students gave leaflets to visitors explaining how "the bosses destroy our health and then try to patch us up".

Together with some of the doctors they organised meetings to which Fiat workers were invited. In April 1969 one meeting drew some 200 workers and 400 students and set a precedent for the impressive "worker-student assemblies" which met during the Hot Autumn.(6) The student movement's ideas about democracy, accountability and participation were being applied to break down the corporate privileges of student and doctor in the interests of a general social transformation.

The movement in the Engineering Faculty at the Statale made similar critiques of the role of engineers in sustaining the dominant ideology. A document produced during the occupation of the faculty in March 1968 made no concessions to the ideals of the liberal professions:

> 'the nucleus of bourgeois ideology is the concept of technical rationality and efficiency. This means the conditioning of the student's mind to the conception of the engineer as God, presiding over every cog in the productive process. The idea is also reinforced by other incentives such as marks, degrees, the profession, social status and wealth.'(7)

As in the case of the medical students' critique of medicine, the role itself was being attacked. It was not a question of appealing to the social conscience of doctors and engineers, or of winning them over to the side of the working class, but of prefiguring their supercession as professions set above other forms of work and other workers. The vision involved both self-abasement and the learning of humility in the existing society, and the anticipation of the utopian unity of the future society. Again the Chinese model was the source

of inspiration, which was counterposed to the modern capitalist factory. In China, according to one student document,

> 'the factory ... is not a purely economic unit ... It is the place where illiterate workers learn to read and write, and where the workers can perfect and extend their skills ... Often houses, schools and recreational facilities are built by them around the factory.'(8)

The document went on to describe how inside the factory there were no bureaucracies, nor systems of material incentivisation such as piece-rates. Leaders were elected and there was a high degree of equality in society. In this framework, the machinery, which in capitalist factories was used to subordinate workers, was subordinated instead to their needs. This vision provided the means to judge the contemporary divisions of mental and manual labour, which the student movement identified as the fundamental barrier to unity between workers and the future technicians, lawyers, doctors and engineers in the universities. When students put themselves 'at the service' of the workers, they were therefore negating their assigned role as the agents of domination.

From the summer of 1968, the student movement in the universities ceased to concentrate on political activity within the educational institutions. The movement continued, but many activists looked to the industrial struggles for a lead. The national conferences were dominated by discussion of worker-student unity, and the 'worker commissions' at the

universities became the main locus of activity. Guido Viale recalled that:

> 'after the struggles of '68 a large number of students were no longer interested in the university ... it was no longer where they socialised and its struggles appeared to them to be futile and folkloristic.'(9)

Instead, according to Viale, student militants were following one of three paths. Firstly, they were leaving their studies to take up jobs in factories. Secondly, they were becoming 'professional militants' in the student movement. And thirdly, students were addressing the question of student-worker unity by working with clerical as well as manual workers, and by examination of their own material situation as part of the proletariat. Each of these options is worth examining to see the way the student movement related to the working class outside its own institutional context.

The decision to take a factory job is more interesting for its symbolic significance than for its political effects. Very few students decided to become workers, but these few realised a fantasy that was entertained by thousands of others. They were literally stripping themselves of their class privileges and plunging themselves into the exploited class. It was an act of total negation of the student identity, and a crossing of the frontier between mental and manual labour at the point where the divide seemed deepest. The case of Andrea Banfi, a student from the Statale who left his studies to take a job at Alfa Romeo, gives a glimpse of this unusual interpretation of student-worker unity. Andrea Banfi created

a storm, however, when it was discovered that he was not a semi-educated son of a peasant as he had declared, but an ex-student and, furthermore, the son of a PSI senator. The company promptly promoted him to a white collar job, and then sacked him. A fellow worker commented:

> 'We immediately went on strike and the whole of the second shift stopped in protest. If a bourgeois wants to renounce his class privileges to fight and pay in person, it's not that he thinks like one of us, he is one of us'.(10)

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there were student activists who concentrated on developing alternative educational practices. The movement at the Statale, which established its hegemony over most of the Milanese movement, worked to build up links with the unions. However, this orientation towards the official workers' movement was not acceptable to many students who regarded the unions along with the traditional left as 'reformist' and 'revisionist'. They sought direct links with workers.

The events at Pirelli, where workers had formed a 'base committee' independent of the union, and the mobilisation of white collar workers in Milan during the autumn of 1968 created a favourable atmosphere for student-worker unity.(11) Students provided a service for workers by making available facilities for meetings and helping distribute leaflets, and they joined picket-lines and demonstrations. Students from the Catholic University worked through the FIM-CISL, with the help of Bruno Manghi and other radical lecturers who collaborated with the union. The idea that students should

put themselves at the service of the working class predominated, especially in 1968.

Statements by students exuded humility and a willingness to learn:

> 'we students refuse to be tomorrow's instruments of exploitation of workers in the hands of the bosses or to be exploiters ourselves ... In the struggle against exploitation the most important role will be played by the working class ... we want to know and discuss your problems so as to learn how to struggle against capitalism and to teach the lessons to younger students'.(12)

However, students also played a more active and interventionist role, which was implicitly vanguardist. Student activists felt that they were qualified to be teachers and educators. The student movement had acquired considerable prestige, especially in the eyes of younger workers. Its activists were skilled organisers, public speakers and leaflet-writers, and some had the advantage of having studied the Marxist classics. After a year of frenetic political agitation involving occupations, demonstrations and clashes with the police, such individuals could claim to have taken risks and made sacrifices for the movement. Moreover, it seemed that in many respects students had anticipated the demands, forms of action and organisation that were being learned by a workers' movement in the early stages of mobilisation. Students had been the first to insist on grass-roots democracy based on general meetings, and on the effectiveness of direct action. They had organised themselves to deal with police attacks.

To what extent student interventions influenced the workers movement will be considered in later chapters, but it is important here to point out that students and agitators could not help but think that they had had a significant part in setting the ball of mobilisation rolling. Throughout 1969 students and workers participated together in vast demonstrations and mingled their collective enthusiasm in meetings held in schools and universities. In the excitement groupings of workers and students were formed in the main Milanese factories. Political fantasies took flight. A document produced by students at the Statale, for example, spoke of the rise of urban guerrilla warfare in the metropolitan countries, where the complexity and precision required by capitalist organisation laid the system open to attack. The student movement was described as the guerrilla-force:

> 'only the working class can make the revolution, but whilst capital has its police ... the student movement is the guerrilla force and the police of the working class in as far as it creates disorganisation and disorder'.(13)

Student activists perceived of themselves in a variety of ways as detonators, ideologues, leaders, and even as guerrillas, but less than ever as students. After the dramatic events at Fiat during the industrial dispute of June-July 1969 when mass meetings involved thousands of workers and students, it seemed that the overthrow of capitalism was a real possibility.

Through the rebel factory workers students lived out their fantasies and their dreams of revolt. And, vice versa, workers were attracted by the "outside agitators" who handed

them leaflets at the works entrance and engaged them in conversations about revolution, China and Marxist theory. It was a strange encounter. For the most part, the students were from middle class backgrounds and enjoyed the educational and other privileges of their class. If it had not been for politics, these social groups would have scarcely have come in contact with one another socially.(14) Through politics there was an exchange which involved much more than conversations about Marx. It was not simply that the agitators were preaching the gospel; they themselves had come to learn "what it was really like" to be a worker. It was a situation not unlike that analysed by Jacques Rancière in terms of the 'thorough-going reciprocity in which workers and intellectuals figure in each others' imaginations in endless circularity'.(15)

Unfortunately these reciprocal fantasies have not been investigated; it can be guessed that they were filled with images and ideas stranger than anything hinted at in contemporary political discourses. Not least, meetings between students and workers had distinct sexual as well as class connotations.(16) This desire on both sides to make a new social identity - to imagine 'the self' as different through 'the other' - was in many ways liberatory and positive. It meant escaping from the prison of a pre-constructed social identity. It meant conceiving of a life that was free from the seemingly inevitable constraints of the existing society. And, in practice, the meeting of workers and students entailed a crossing of social and cultural frontiers. New possibilities were opened up for living a life in which every sort of person

met socially. The promise was there of rich and diverse experiences which a class society prohibited.

The coming together of 'outside agitators' and workers had its positive, utopian moments - moments which pre-figured an egalitarian society. The relationship, however, was not always reciprocal in an egalitarian sense. The students were often more fascinated by their image of the working class than interested in getting to know workers as individuals. They thrust them back into a class identity which was imprisoning in so far as it denied individuality and disqualified dreams and ambitions which deviated from proscribed notions of class consciousness. Thus, student activists, who had started by demanding education as everyone's right, ended by telling workers that the pursuit of learning and culture was an illusion. Vittorio Foa wrote of this attitude:

> 'that workers' dream and desire for books is rightful even when the books themselves are full of lies. Culture and books can be criticised when they have been mastered, not by rejecting them a priori, and then delegating the leadership of one's struggles to the offspring of the capitalists.'(17)

The middle class utopian thinkers who went to preach to Rancière's proletarians looked forward to guiding a working class which was industrious and disciplined. A class that was above all productive. By contrast the Marxist intellectuals and students in Italy in 1969 admired workers' disruptiveness. Yet they too wanted (unconsciously) to lead and to organise workers to make that disruption into revolution. During the Hot Autumn they founded several revolutionary

organisations for this purpose, and these quickly dominated the horizons of the student movement.

Political groups such as Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia, Potere Operaio, Il Manifesto and the archipelago of other organisations came into existence because of the students' movement.[18] Not that a New Left did not predate 1968, as has been seen, but it was isolated. The movement not only popularised the ideas of its forerunners, but provided the leaderships, cadres and the bulk of the membership of the groups. At the same time, the political groups put an end to the student movement as an autonomous force; student issues were subordinated to strategies relating to the industrial working class; the ideas of the party and political leadership, which the student movement had criticised, were re-established as orthodoxies. The new organisations claimed to represent the working class. The worker-student unity developed by the movements of 1968-9 gave way to a hierarchical relationship in which the ex-student activists were usually the leaders. For a large part of the movement (though not all of it) the liberatory utopianism it generated was destined to wither under the weight of a new orthodoxy.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 13

1. Carta Programmatica - Facoltà Umanistiche Presentata all'Assemblea Occupante, 19th March 1968.

2. Comitato di Lotta, Statale-Ingegneria.

3. The reference to further education as a 'parking area' ('area di parcheggio') - that is a place for temporarily absorbing unemployment - appears in student documents in late 1968 and early 1969, but does not become a central theme until the 1970's.

4. Movimento Studentesco-Medicina, leaflet of Comitato d'azione salute (undated).

5. L'Unità (17-1-69).

6. "The Worker:Student Assemblies in Turin" in Red Notes, Working Class Autonomy (London, 1979), p. 187.

7. Documenti Conclusivi dei Lavori dell'Assemblea degli Studenti della Facoltà di Ingegneria, 8-14th March 1968.

8. Engineering Faculty, Comitato di Lotta, leaflet (undated). For a sophisticated example of enthusiasm for the Chinese factory, see Emilio Reyneri, "La lotta per la produzione e l'organizzazione del lavoro nelle fabbriche cinesi" in Vento dell'Este, 23, 1971.

9. Guido Viale, Sessantotto, p. 75-9. The killings of workers at Avola in December 1968, and at Baltipaglia in April 1969, were important turning-points in this respect. The massive protest demonstrations and sense of moral outrage in leaflets etc. points to a feeling that the important things happened in the streets not in the class-room.

10. Re Nudo, November 1970.

11. See Part 4, Chapter 16.

12. Borletti Gruppo Operai, Studenti, leaflet (7th October 1968).

13. Leaflet entitled: 'Guerriglia urbana e rivoluzione operaia'. Unsigned and undated, but likely to have been written in 1969 because of the way it references the student movement; this leaflet can be read as evidence of a fascination in political violence which was common in the student movement.

However, it can also be read as a gesture of the "lunatic fringe". Situationists and anarchists delighted in horrifying everyone who picked up one of their leaflets. One headed: 'Andate e mercificateri' (Go sell yourselves), was handed out at the Milan Trade Fair in 1969. It began: 'You - have a house, have a T.V., have (perhaps) a car - but you have a shit life', in I dieci anni che sconvolsero il mondo (Rome, 1978), pp. 104-105.

14. The image of the student was still that of a "figlio di papa" for many workers. And diffidence and suspicion did not evaporate when students declared themselves pro-worker. Nanni Balestrini writes that the students at the Fiat factory gates made him curious to begin with, "then in the end I thought they were mad, silly buggers, missionaries"; N. Ballestrini, Vogliamo tutto, p. 53.

15. J. Rancière, 'Preface to Proletarian Nights', p. 10.

16. Students acquired a reputation for bohemianism which was reinforced by press stories of their outrageous behaviour. Free love, drugs, and every sort of excess and transgression was associated with students. The other side of the coin to prejudices against students was a fascination in their life-style. Young workers, especially, were attracted to it, and the idea of picking up a woman student must explain many cases of otherwise inexplicable interest in Marxist theory.

17. Vittorio Foa, Introduction, in Levi Arian, Studenti-Lavoratori, pp. 41-43.

There were students, especially in the Education Faculty of the Catholic University, who undertook voluntary teaching in poor areas (the so-called "università popolare"), but it was not until the setting-up of the 150 Hours scheme in 1973 that this sort of initiative gained political credibility.

18. Lotta Continua was perhaps the most important organisation to come out of the student movement. Precisely because it did not have a Leninist conception of the party like most of the other extraparliamentary groups, it was most responsive to grass-roots movements; see Luigi Bobbio, Lotta Continua: storia di una organizzazione revoluzionaria (Rome, 1979).

Whilst Lotta Continua began as a mainly Turin-based organisation, Avanguardia Operaia was largely Milan-based. It had members in industry who had been active in the CUB'S in 1968-9 and students, mainly from the science faculties of the State University. Its politics were much more orthodoxly Leninist; early documents speak of students bringing 'consciousness' to workers who would otherwise be stuck in trade unionism; see Avanguardia Operaia (November-December) 1969; and (March-April) 1970.

CHAPTER 14: DREAMING OF A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The student movement's critiques of the educational system, for its exclusivist and hierarchical structures of access and control, extended beyond the institutions themselves. The movement had always insisted that schooling was not so much a means of changing society as of legitimating existing inequalities, and that therefore the forms of knowledge that it passed on to students were partial and limiting. Instead, it proposed a strategy of 'education through struggle' that connected up the different spheres of society through a political movement. As has been seen, students of Medicine at the State University in Milan linked their struggles over course-contents and teaching methods to the organisation of health in society. Architecture students related their studies to the politics of housing, and the movement at the Catholic University questioned the role of the Church in supporting the status quo. The student movement created an acute awareness of how knowledges and skills were socially constructed and transmitted, and how they were made to serve class interests in the hands of the doctor, engineer or teacher. Students, moreover, represented a pole of attraction for those involved in cultural production.

Pierre Bourdieu has commented interestingly on the role of youth within modern European culture:

> 'It is clear that the primacy the field of cultural production gives to youth can, once again, be traced back to the basis of the field in the rejection of power and of the 'economy'. The reason why 'intellectuals' and artists always tend to align themselves with 'youth'

> in their manner of dress and in their whole bodily hexis is that, in representations as in reality, the opposition between the 'old' and the 'young' is homologous with the opposition between power and 'bourgeois' seriousness on the one hand, and indifference to power or money and the 'intellectual' refusal of the 'spirit of seriousness', on the other hand. The 'bourgeois' world-view, which measures age by power or by the corresponding relation to power, endorses this opposition when it identifies the 'intellectual' with the young 'bourgeois' by virtue of their common status as dominated fractions of the dominant group, from whom money and power are temporarily withheld.'(1)

This observation does not perhaps apply to all intellectuals and artists in the wake of 1968; Pasolini for example had little time for the student rebels. But at a European level it is possible to see cultural alignments crystallising out along these lines. This was particularly apparent in France, a country in which intellectuals were historically prominent in revolutionary upheavals, but in Italy too, film-makers and others rallied around the forces of opposition to the status quo. The idea of "cultural revolution" galvanised the left wing intelligensia.

The cultural challenge represented by the student movement was central to the development of a counter-culture in the 1970's. In every Italian city (and perhaps more so in Milan than elsewhere) bookshops, cultural centres, political centres, bars and eating places testified to the existence of a world separate from and in conflict with the dominant urban institutions. Its boundaries were often marked out by graffitti. But the "cultural revolution" also penetrated the practices of

those working within the dominant institutions, especially the professions. As will be seen, it was an experience which was both positive and negative. In the 1970's the contradictions of the 1968-9 years were lived out in the cultural and intellectual field.

Counter-Information

The idea of counter-information has a long history which antedates the student movement. It was at the heart of struggles for freedoms of speech and opinion which in Italy were closely associated with the radical wing of the movement for national unification. Then the workers' movement from the time of the early Socialist Party put great energy into producing party, union and other papers. The movements of 1968-9 revived the campaigning spirit of more heroic times. But counter-information was seen as more significant and was more self-consciously undertaken than at any time since the Resistance. (The word '_controinformazione_' itself was coined in the late '60's.) The new importance of the mass media in society was highlighted by its role in representing contemporary conflicts, whilst the student movement led the way in exposing and counteracting their "dis-information" ("_disinformazione_").

The student movement was hostile to the national press. Students read the papers voraciously to see what was happening in the world (it was a period of dramatic advances by the North Vietnamese, of street insurrections in Paris and so on), and also to read accounts of events in which they themselves

had participated. They were, therefore, unusually 'media-conscious' and aware of how they themselves and the movements with which they identified were being reported. They were in a position to make 'oppositional readings' of the newspapers not only on the basis of ideological positions, but through personal experience and oral accounts of demonstrations and occupations.(2) The formation of a collective identity through the movement created a heightened sensibility as to how that identity was represented by the dominant groups. Thus the reports in the Corriere della Sera, which spoke of the students as 'Chinese' ('cinesi') and which constructed a stereotype of the movement activists as alien and threatening, provoked anger, scorn and, on one occasion, petrol-bombs.(3) At the Information Centres in the universities there were boards with the day's press cuttings concerning the movement, where students wrote up their opinions and comments.

Two of the movements' graffitti about the press give an insight into its critique of the mass media. Firstly, some writing on a Milanese wall explained: 'The difference between balls and pillocks is as follows: the balls are written by the Corriere and it's the pillocks that read and believe it'. A second piece of graffitti examined the difference between two papers: 'For a falsely objective version read the Giorno, and for an objectively false one read the Corriere'.(4) These comments are interesting for their very format and style. They are spray-canned on to the wall for all to see, and address the passer-by directly

and succinctly. They involve the reader in a little puzzle or play with sexual swear-words in ways that make the reader appear cleverer than the pretentious readership of the Corriere. Then, because they are memorable, the graffitti are likely to be copied and recounted. As for their message, these graffitti spell out the movement's total opposition to the press. It does not call for fairer reportage or more objectivity, but seeks to destroy the myth of objectivity and disinterestedness. The movement attacked what it regarded as the inevitable 'disinformation' coming from papers like La Stampa, which were owned by Fiat and other corporations. These were thought to 'black-out' news or to distort and manipulate information according to the needs of the owners and the capitalist class in general. This power resulted from economic leverage (the ownership of the means of communication), and from the servility of the journalists, the 'bosses' lackeys' ('servi del padrone'). This model of media manipulation fitted with the complementary notion of 'false consciousness', and with the Marcusean analysis of the 'One Dimensional Society', according to which consensus was achieved by the ruling class through its control and manipulation of various private and State apparatuses,(e.g. the Church, the press and educational institutions).(5)

This model of total social control from above did not, however, induce a sense of pessimism or hopelessness among its promulgators in the movement. Rather, it heightened awareness that every aspect of life was affected by cultural

domination, and of the need 'to eliminate the policeman in our brains' ('eliminiamo il poliziotto che è nel nostro cervello'), as one slogan put it. The movement's responses set the agenda for the creation of communicative strategies from below in the following decade. These can be considered under two headings: counter-information and counter-culture.

The counter-information developed by the movement ranged from individual, improvised acts to more collective and long-term action. The most common forms of counter-information used the walls of the city and the roneo machine to communicate messages. Graffitti appeared everywhere; a survey carried out in 1969 in the university and polytechnic areas of Milan counted 868 examples; in the hottest months of student revolt, the sign-posts near the university had to be replaced every fortnight because of graffitti; in January 1971 the prefect of Milan called for action against graffitti, which according to a municipal estimate, totalled 31,000 in number.(6) The graffitti about the press, which have already been mentioned, were perhaps more subtle than the majority of examples, but even the crudest and simplest ones expressed the desire to have a say. Instead of passively reading the publicity in the underground trains and stations, young passengers added their own 'bubbles' with comments, carrying on a conversation in graffitti with a previous wall-writer. The roneoed leaflet was another form of counter-information developed in 1968, which had a democratising

potential in that it was cheap and easily produced, though it seems that often the sheer ease of reproduction resulted in "over-kill".

The leaflets, dazibao slogans and graffitti of the movement enabled the collective and individual expression of feelings and opinions on a massive scale. However, it was the weekly newspaper which became the preferred vehicle for the movement's propaganda. It represented a more durable challenge and the first step in the construction of an alternative circuit of information to that constituted by the national press. The most successful of these was Lotta Continua, which first came out in November 1969, but it was joined by Il Manifesto and others at local and national levels.(7) They were the organs of the extraparliamentary political groups which were mostly formed in 1969. Their most important campaign of counter-information concerned the events of late December 1969 - the Piazza Fontana bombing, the so-called 'suicide' of Pinelli, and the witch-hunt that put Pietro Valpreda behind bars. Whilst the Corriere della Sera and the national press blamed the anarchists and the Left for the terrorism and supported police action against them, Lotta Continua in particular played a crucial role in telling a different story.(8) A group of journalists wrote a book called "The State Massacre" ('La Strage di Stato') in which they exposed the fascist nature of the bombing, and the connections between its perpetrators and high State officials. It was a remarkable feat of investigative journalism. It established the importance of the development of alternative sources of information, and hence of papers written from

within the movement. It set in motion grass-roots investigations in factories, schools and neighbourhoods into local fascists, whose names were then published in papers and leaflets. Furthermore, radical journalists working within the commercial press were encouraged to investigate corruption and the abuse of power. They organised the Committee Against Repression to defend freedom of opinion when editors of the minority press were charged under the surviving articles of the fascist penal code, which included the 'crime of opinion' ('reato d'opinione') and criminalised 'incitement' ('instigazione a delinquere'). In a country in which the press had been traditionally tied to the interests of the State and to political parties, the growth of radical journalism under the impact of the new counter-information campaigns was an important change.(9)

Refounding a Popular Culture: the Case of Radical Theatre

The campaign in the defence of Pietro Valpreda, which lasted several years, saw some inspired acts of counter-information, including the adoption of the prisoner as a parliamentary candidate. A memorable song told the story of Pinelli's death and the tragic episode was the subject of Dario Fo's play The Accidental Death of An Anarchist. In this period, counter-information connected up with the development of a wider counter-culture based on the movements of opposition. Playwrights, actors and actresses, film-makers, cartoonists and others channeled their energies into political

work.[10] In the light of the student movement's critiques of the traditional role of the artist and intellectual, their commitment was not restricted to signing petitions and fund-raising.[11] Goffredo Fofi outlined their new role within the movement;

> 'no cultural revolution is possible without a direct relationship with the masses, and the only real relationship is through political militancy, even if today ... this must be mainly an individual connection with particular struggles given that there does not as yet exist a party to unify the different activities.'[12]

This new role can be seen at its most creative in the theatre of Dario Fo.

Dario Fo and Franca Rame had been performing an experimental theatre which dealt with political issues since the early 1960's; on one occasion Fo was even challenged to a duel by an artillery officer for slighting the honour of the Italian army, and he was also arrested in Siena for abusing President Johnson in a play. However, they were working within traditional theatre and therefore to privileged middle class audiences. In 1968 they decided to leave it, 'because', writes Franca Rame, 'we had realised that, despite the hostility of a few, obtuse reactionaries, the upper middle class reacted to our 'spankings' almost with pleasure'. The mass movements of 1968-9 put their political integrity in question. According to Franca Rame:

> 'You are allowed to mock authority, but if you do it from the outside, you will burn. This is what we understood. In order to feel at one with our political commitment, it was no longer enough to consider ourselves democratic, left-wing artists full of sympathy for

> the working class and the exploited ... The lesson came to us directly from the extraordinary struggles of working people, from the young people's fight against authoritarianism and injustice in the schools, and from their struggle for a new culture and relationship with the exploited classes ... We had to place ourselves entirely at the service of the exploited, and to become their minstrels.'(13)

The decision to take theatre to the workers and make it part of the movements of opposition meant changing that theatre. Firstly, the plays had to be performed wherever people met socially; to begin with the locations were workers' clubs, bowling alleys, occupied factories, suburban cinemas, and only rarely theatres. In their first year they performed to over 200,000 spectators, of whom 70% had never previously seen a play. Secondly, the plays were written and performed as political interventions. (And they were very much the product of collective decision-making, even if Fo was the charismatic leader.) The subject-matter related directly to ongoing events. This was the case with The Accidental Death of An Anarchist, put on in Milan during the trial of Lotta Continua for its part in blaming the chief-of-police for Pinelli's death. But many other performances were adapted to take account of the particular local struggles. Thirdly, Dario Fo and his company, Il Comune, developed a special relationship to the audience. During performances of the plays, which were mainly farces, the audience was invited to participate as in an English pantomime, and afterwards there were discussions about the issues being dealt with. Moreover, the takings would often be contributed to solidarity campaigns and strike funds.(14)

The work of Dario Fo and Il Comune was especially important because it represented a developed cultural politics - a cultural politics which predominated in the social movements in the first half of the 1970's. It was not merely an example of agitprop theatre used as a tactic; it was an expression of a more ambitious project of refounding a popular culture. Fo himself was an exceptionally brilliant and lucid spokesman for a conception of theatre and art which Il Comune attempted to enact through its performances. Speaking at an event in France, he outlined the origins and history of popular theatrical forms. For Fo, the heyday of popular theatre was during the Middle Ages (in Paris in the 15th century, he told his audience, there was one juggler to sixty inhabitants), and it was this tradition which provided the raw materials for the reconstruction of a living theatre. This popular theatre had, according to Fo, been killed off by the bourgeoisie and the problem was to undermine bourgeois artistic norms in their turn. Brecht had argued along similar lines, said Fo:

> 'You always go back to Brecht; he explained it well, but it's a little difficult to understand. He said that you must always act in the third person, escape from individualism and egoism ... be someone who is on the outside, and who presents the person as a chorus. The comedian must destroy the figure of the comedian himself, and then recompose it in front of the spectators.'(15)

But Fo argued that epic theatre was not Brecht's invention; it was part of popular tradition which needed to be resurrected:

> 'To really understand epic theatre, it is enough to see the people ('le peuple'). The people always present a different ideology to that of the bourgeoisie. There is a collective spirit: we talk about ourselves, our problems, the problems of the community. We aim to create a community like the community ('la comunione') of the theatre in the Middle Ages ... You must act with the public, listen to its rhythms, improvise ... at any moment you must change, cut, shift your timing.'(16)

In the Middle Ages, according to Fo, 'the people's culture was autonomous from that of their rulers, and this was what modern theatre had to recreate - an autonomous culture. The intellectuals' task was to help rediscover popular history, language and culture, and to free it of 'bourgeois baubles'.

To make his case, Dario Fo refers to Mao Tse Tung's and Gramsci's ideas, thereby claiming legitimacy for his theories within the communist tradition. Yet it is Rabelais who inspires him:

> 'When Rabelais speaks French he carries out an operation which has been lost to us. He takes up several expressions from dialects and enriches his own language, thereby making something un-bourgeois. He sought to make a sort of lexical revolution, and that's an example we must follow.'(17)

But more often Fo refers directly to contemporary events as a source of ideas and a context for creating a new set of relations with the audience, giving back to 'the people' what he has learnt from them:

> 'I feel myself part of the people, and when I'm going to write plays, I go to the people, not to flatter but to learn ... When the movement calls us because there is a trial, we turn up the day beforehand and reconstruct the event. I play the judge, the lawyer plays the lawyer, the workers play the workers, some comrades play the police, and the show is on. And when the real spectacle is on - that's to say the moment of judgement - there are some cracking jokes because the public understands the hypocrisy of power.'(18)

The test of this idea of theatre was measured by its capacity to generate audience involvement, and its power to entertain and educate at the same time. This was a test which Il Comune and Fo triumphantly succeeded in. What is more problematic is whether this theatre contributed to a transformation of the cultural situation over a longer term.

The role of Fo's theatre can be compared to the role played by don Milani in providing a critique of the dominant culture and a model for a popular culture. Although they belong to different worlds - don Milani to a Catholic world and Fo to a secular radical socialist tradition - there are close parallels in their work. Both see 'the people' as the creators of language, which the rulers then formalise, suck dry and use as an instrument of domination (in the shape of the 'bourgeois' school or theatre). 'The people' use words in a simple, concrete and direct way which describes 'reality' truthfully and with beauty, but they are made to distrust their own sensibilities by cultured <u>élites</u>. Those that work the soil or work in the factories are somehow closer to Nature (to the 'nature of things') than those who rule over them, and the rhythms of their labour resonate in the deeper structural

movements of the culture, which, however, are hidden from them by the cleverness and artifice of those who do no work. Popular culture is without boundaries (or rather it is potentially universal) because it springs out of everyday life, whilst Culture with a capital 'C' is closed within the walls of museums and theatres or within library tomes. As the originators of language and the 'rooted' members of society, the ordinary people bear within them the traces of earlier cultures; they have a history which makes the History of the ruling group into the fabrication of parvenus. All these elements, (albeit with different stresses and combinations), underpin Dario Fo's and don Milani's visions of how to change the order of things. Whilst it gave them great strengths, it also entailed severe weaknesses.

The strengths can be seen in the degree of influence exercised by the work of don Milani and Dario Fo within the social movements, and in the mobilising qualities of the ideas of popular creativity, autonomy and self-activity. Labour was invested with dignity and culture was divested of mystique. A widespread desire by factory workers and others to have their say brought the sound of unheard voices into a cultural world built on their exclusion. The ideas of popular culture celebrated not the enfranchisement of the masses and their inclusion within the formal domain of the cultural (the schools, universities etc.), but the destruction of the frontiers of knowledge policed by academics, doctors, lawyers and politicians. They envisaged

the 'return' of distinctively 'cultural' practices to the fields and workplaces, and the re-establishment of a new harmony of head and hand. It was a utopian vision of considerable appeal, which went beyond the immediate situation. It drew on a rich vein of radicalism in Western European culture, which can be identified in writers as various as Rousseau, Marx and Bergson.

The weaknesses of this project of 'cultural revolution' are intertwined with its strengths. Its appeal to myths inspired enthusiasm by providing epic narratives for class struggle in culture. But the evocation of a 'golden age' and of an image of a 'pure' popular culture served also to limit and even stultify cultural innovation. Just as the notions of re-living the Bolshevik or Chinese Cultural Revolutions blinded activists to social changes and complexities, so myths of a past popular culture made it difficult to work within a contemporary environment.

The particular predilection for myths is clearly manifested in the fascination for China. China acted as a sort of spiritual homeland for a generation which could no longer believe in the USSR. Much of the young Italian intelligensia of the period greatly admired the Chinese Cultural Revolution; China represented a model of how intellectuals could work with and among 'the people' (the students who worked in the fields whilst the peasants studied; the 'barefoot doctor'; the poet or painter whose art 'served the people'). At the same time, 'Chinese culture' was presented as the combination of popular wisdom and a

sophisticated but simple Marxism. Brecht's poems, inspired by Chinese subjects and the writings of Lu Hsun, became enormously popular. Above all, there was an image of Chinese people as hard-working but happy. Intellectuals who travelled there, (especially women, it seems), wrote about this:

> 'In China there is no sign of alienation, nervous disorders nor of the disatomisation ('la disatomizzazione') within the individual that you find in consumer society. The world of the Chinese is compact, integrated and an absolute whole.'(19)

Significant, of course, is not what this tells us about China, but what it tells us about the writers and readers of this literature. Umberto Melotti draws attention to the historical precedents:

> 'It is worth recalling how this mythology of "Socialist China" has emerged historically. In many respects, it is reminiscent of the 18th century mythology of "good and just government in China", which was spread on the basis of similarly insufficient evidence among the enlightenment philosophers and men of letters.'(20)

The Chinese myth was believed in by those who wanted to create a simple, humane egalitarian society in the place of the divided and competitive society in which they lived. It made it possible to criticise the existing order of things with reference to an ideal just as Montesquieu, Rousseau, and others had done in the past. However, the dream of a unified popular culture was backward-looking. It harked back to Communist and Socialist traditions at a time when they no longer connected up with the everyday experience of the

majority of people. The ideal of a class-based, autonomous culture did not help make sense of a situation of cultural diversification in which identities were constructed across classes and across national frontiers. The Chinese myth was more a throw-back to a golden age than a future-oriented utopia.

The idea of re-making a popular culture entailed celebrating older technologies and the relationship between producer, a product and consumer which they realised (Fo's theatre was typical in this respect). This was regarded as 'authentic' by contrast with the 'mass culture' produced by the modern media which, however, had effectively marginalised older cultural forms. This New Left like the traditional Left dismissed 'mass culture' as part of the capitalist 'consciousness-industry'.(21) The search for a 'genuine' popular culture was strangely provincial and backward-looking. When cultural exchanges across frontiers were multiplying as never before, and when the plurality of signs and images defied simple categorisations according to class origin, there was a longing for cultural 'purity' - for the 'compact, integrated society' in which community appeared as a simple, organic set of relations between people. The disorder of the city was rejected in the name of an ideal, organic society which was rural in its inspiration. It was utopian, therefore, in the pejorative sense, because it attempted to deny the complexity, diversity and conflict of modern societies. Moreover, it conjured up a relationship between intellectuals and 'the masses' which was untenable.

A Culture of Guilt

The student movement of '68 did not by itself produce a radicalisation within the professions and the development of an extensive counter-culture; its impact must be taken in conjunction with that of the workers' movement, and its importance needs to be understood as symbolic. "'68" is used here as a short-hand way of referencing all the various radical currents which surfaced in the late '60's and early '70's. It is a term which covers a considerable range of strategies for change - a range which resulted from the reactivation of older civil libertarian as well as the creation of new forms of resistance. '68 brought into the open a plurality of politico-cultural positions, and marked a break with the clear demarcations into 'camps' that had been inherited from the Cold War period. If the old alignments were still visible, they were now criss-crossed by differences within both the Communist and Catholic 'worlds'. Moreover, a radicalism which was more typical of the United States was beginning to get a foothold in Italian society, as the development of a sexual politics in the early '70's was to show. However, it was not until the mid '70's that the richness and diversity of cultural changes became fully visible.

In many respects, the cultural changes immediately following on from the social movements were not as innovative as they seemed at the time. Or, rather, there was a widespread misrecognition of what was 'old' and what was 'new'. The first stirrings of a post '68 feminism and youth politics (which

are dealt with at greater length in Part 5) were frequently ignored or regarded as a '60's hangover, whilst the rediscovery of Marxism was seen as something quite novel. A description of the rebirth of Marxism written by Perry Anderson in 1974 sums up a perspective common to the New Left in Western Europe:

> 'The advent of a new period in the workers' movement, bringing to an end the long class pause that divided theory from practice, is now however visible ... The chance of a revolutionary circuit between Marxist theory and mass practice, looped through real struggles of the industrial working class, has now become steadily greater. The consequences of such a reunification of theory and practice would be to transform Marxism itself - recreating conditions which, in their own time, produced the founders of historical materialism.'(22)

It was a perspective which recapitulated the historical model. All the 'heresies' of the New Left, from the Trotskyisms, which were stronger in France and Britain, to the Marxist-Leninisms which dominated in Italy, proclaimed that the moment had come for the refoundation of the communist project and the establishment of a new and fruitful relationship between theory and practice, between intellectuals and masses.

How the relationship between Marxist intellectuals and the working class was to be changed was a matter for debate. There was no uniform position. But in Italy, where the Chinese model of cultural revolution was so influential, there was little space for the intellectual mandarin. As has been seen in relation to the students' movement, populist evocations of 'mass practice' tended to prevail over theoretical concerns.

Discourses were above all moral. A number of positive consequences flowed from this orientation. Intellectuals and professional people turned their backs on the privileges and status accorded to them in society, and sought to redefine their roles in terms of social cooperation among equals rather than of competition between individuals and corporate interests. They sought to undermine the culture which exalted mental labour and despised those who worked with their hands. However, the search for what Goffredo Fofi called a 'direct relationship with the masses' was a contradictory phenomenon with some decidedly negative features. It was caught between a desire to lose a class identity and yet to preserve the intellectual's special mission in society.

The contradiction in the Left wing intellectual's self-image following '68 is interestingly dealt with by Richard Sennett in relation to Jean-Paul Sartre. Although the analysis focuses on him, it deals interestingly with the relationship of culture and radical politics:

> 'What then is the role of the intellectual gauchiste?, Gerassi asks Sartre, and the philosopher gives a peculiar answer. The only writing worth doing, he says, is the political tract, because the position of the intellectual has changed: "He must now write with the masses, and through them, and therefore put his technical knowledge at their disposal. In other words, his privileged status is over. Today it is sheer bad faith, hence counter-revolutionary, for the intellectual to dwell on his own problems". Sartre now believed the intellectual must sacrifice himself for the workers; "he must be dedicated to work for their problems, not his own".'(23)

When asked why he had just finished a two-thousand-page book on Flaubert, Sartre accused himself of "petit-bourgeois escapism".

And when asked about his support for a Cuban poet imprisoned for counter-revolution, he explains that all genuinely revolutionary governments honour creative freedom. He contradicts himself. Sennett comments:

> 'In his guilty confusion, Sartre shows himself to share ... two assumptions about workers ... First, that the man of culture - the poet, philosopher, social visionary - inhabits a world that cannot be assimilated to the realities of working class life. Sartre apologises for thinking about Flaubert. He respects the work workers do, indeed he idolises it; he is afraid he will alienate them by his work. Yet at the same time he is afraid his work is innately privileged ... and may have rights against the revolution ... culture and the masses, if not necessarily enemies, have at best few interests in common ... Second ... the basis of rebellion is still a calculation of material interest. Material hardship caused by the system makes people rebel, material reward makes them defend ... (he) does not really believe that the aphorism, Man lives not by bread alone, applies to workers.'(24)

In the post 1968 period in Italy the idea of cultural revolution was heavily impregnated with the attitudes implicit in Sartre's answers. Intellectuals did indeed 'sacrifice themselves for the workers', and the political tract became the privileged vehicle for cultural and political writings. They felt anxious about 'petit bourgeois' pursuits and signs of individualism. Intellectuals wanted to abolish themselves as a caste and to become one with the working class which they sought to serve. When in 1973 the 150 Hours scheme was established giving workers the right to study-leave, it

was welcomed as a chance to do just this:

> 'The presence of the working class and its struggles has really made itself felt. If up till now it only affected a few more class conscious intellectuals, now even here there is a refusal to delegate ('un rifiuto della delega'), (i.e. the workers are taking over education themselves). The struggles are also invading the field of the spirit and transforming interpretations of reality into a social need to be put alongside other needs (housing, services etc.).'(25)

The intellectual, in the old sense, would be replaced by a new 'collective intellectual' combining the 'intellectuals, technicians and workers'.

This vision of the transcendence of divisions of mental and manual labour appears to subvert the Sartrian dichotomy. However, the 150 Hours courses reproduced it in another guise. The project of creating a 'working class culture', and criticising culture 'from a workers' point of view' was approached in such a way that courses dealt almost exclusively with the factory. The preferred themes included health hazards, the labour process and trade union history.(26) In other words, worker-students did not study Philosophy, Literature, Languages or other subjects which were usually regarded as Culture with a capital 'C'. Those organising the courses (the trade unions, teachers and political activists) either assumed that workers would not be interested, or that they would be alienated by such things. Instead, they applied their 'operaist' version of materialism to return the workers 'in theory' to the factories they had escaped from for a few hours. Whilst the 150 Hours

courses were often useful to political militants and factory delegates, they often did not respond to the needs and secret desires of the majority. Instead of liberating workers from the thrall of intellectuals, the scheme in its initial years fulfilled the fantasies of '_operaists_' rather than those of the '_operai_' and '_operaie_' themselves. The old divisions between the 'educators' and the 'uneducated' were far from abolished.(27)

This narrow materialist conception of culture infected not just those working in education, but artists, writers and film-makers who associated themselves with the social movements. Criteria of 'political reference' pressed down on them, and it became difficult to do work without an explicit political theme. 'Content' was considered all-important and 'form' was treated as secondary. In fact, formal experimentation was regarded with suspicion. It was thought that the workers would not understand or like cultural products which were 'difficult'. Intellectuals and artists should, in other words, give up self-indulgence and the preoccupations of their subculture and class,and put themselves at the service of the masses who did not want to read Dante or see Godard films. Both the 'bourgeois' culture learnt at the _liceo_, and the 'avant-garde' culture, were to be rejected in the name of 'cultural revolution'.

In a survey of cultural production in the wake of '68-9, Luigi Manconi concludes that the period from 1967 to 1974 were 'dark years'; whilst there was some ferment in the fields of music, theatre, poetry, reviews and publishing there

was little of significance produced; the results of work in photography, cinema and the novel were 'undoubtedly modest':

> 'The reasons for this: the years 1967-9 effectively represented an unprecedented break with regard to the previous thirty years of ideologies and culture. And this is a good thing; but they also dried up the potential expressive energies of the new generations for a five year period. From this resulted a condition of 'memory-lack' for a whole stratum of young people, especially in relation to their own historical/social identity ... Moreover, the culture industry was hostile to innovation.'(28)

This explanation for the cultural poverty of the '68 generation is not adequate, however. It is necessary to show how a certain conception of politics and of the relationship between intellectuals and the working class paralysed or hampered creative activity. Whilst someone of the independence and inventiveness of Dario Fo could still work well, a younger generation found itself imitating him. Above all, it was caught in the impossible contradiction of Sartre's position. Intellectuals felt that they only had a right to exist in so far as they were being useful, and usefulness was defined narrowly. Cultural practices had to produce political messages. Pedagogic modes prevailed, and a moral universe was created with its 'good' and 'bad' characters. Thus, Goffredo Fofi, who was an important critic and spokesperson on the cultural politics of the Left, wrote a book on Italian cinema in 1971 in which he judged film-makers according to a grid of political correctness.(29)

The cinema journal which he edited, Ombre Rosse, actually ceased to talk about films and dealt instead with directly political issues. This was symptomatic of the way in which the specificity of the cultural was reduced in this period to a notion of 'class struggle', with unfortunate consequences.

The 'dark years', however, hid undercurrents within Italian cultural life which were to break the surface in the mid '70's. The Sartrean position was extremely fragile. Manconi has written that behind the screen of the 'monoculture' many 'cultivated their own secret vices in clandestinity' or sought to infiltrate them into the dominant political discourses. When the hold of the narrow notions of the political was put in crisis (the so-called 'crisis of militancy'), it was through appeals to those things which had been sacrificed in the past - personal and 'private' life, poetic and literary forms, creative activities and so on.(30) Furthermore, it was discovered that the young workers, who were said not to be interested in such things but only in working conditions and factory struggles, were much more attracted to the world of youth subcultures and, in the case of women, to the feminist movement, than to the Extraparliament Left. Whilst '68 did represent a break within Italian culture, its full implications did not become apparent before the emergence of the new social movements in the 1970's.

Looking back over the 1970's it is possible to offer a tentative evaluation of the cultural changes brought about by or through the social movements which dominated horizons of

a generation. Goffredo Fofi has commented that it was a decade in which there were lively experiments, but that many opportunities were lost and that little of lasting cultural significance was produced. The revival of cultural activities in the mid '70's and the proliferation of small publishers gave rise to

> 'a production which was very immediate, tied to the ideas of the moment and lacking in reflection ... in part it was a rush after the fashionable, and in part the response to real needs.'(31)

The lack of a major film or written piece should be explained in terms of the preference for producing the ephemeral (whether in the shape of radio, music or theatre):

> 'The 'cultural product' of the movement was directed towards the immediate. It sprang from the desire for direct participation in making culture ... so that the result was fragmentary, uneven, instantaneous, inconclusive and without respect for canons governing writing or performance.'(32)

Whilst this approach to cultural life and activity had its moments of genuine innovation (as in Dario Fo's theatre), it was vitiated by assumptions about the relationship of culture to 'class politics' and the role of the intellectual or artist in this relationship. This weakness in the foundations of the counter-cultural project has made it an easy target for the critical attack by members of the cultural establishment, and has led to its abandonment by many of its leading proponents.(33) But whether this crisis and re-evaluation leads to important contributions in the future by the generations of the '68 and '77 movements in the

scientific and cultural fields, as Fofi hypothesises, is an open question.

Radicalisation within the Professions

The concept of 'cultural revolution' was important in post '68 oppositional politics in Italy because it stood for total change. It embodied the aspiration to transform daily life in all its aspects, so that politics was no longer separated out for ordinary decision-making. Some of the strategies for making a cultural revolution centred on the construction of alternative and oppositional 'areas'; creating counter-information and popular culture were both projects designed to 'autonomise' the production and consumption of cultural goods from the laws and ideas of the market. They were, above all, extra-institutional. However, other strategies involved the 'long march through the institutions'. They entailed taking the struggles of 'outside-society' inside the corridors, court-rooms and class-rooms of the powerful. This other aspect of the cultural revolution was especially significant for radicals working within the professions.

The movements of 1968-9 swept the professions into the political fray. Doctors, lawyers and teachers as well as journalists and film-makers were drawn into the social conflicts, and new conflicts erupted within their ranks. Not that they had previously been detached from politics. On the contrary, different tendencies jockeyed for power in

their representative bodies. The Left had its advocates, even though they had none of the influence of groups like the Masons. However, the movements not only aggravated existing divisions; they created new ones by questioning the privileges, life-styles and 'mysteries' cultivated in the professions. They attacked the professional ideologies (e.g. the journalist's conceptions of impartiality, news values etc.), which the traditional Left had by and large respected.

The new wave of radicalism driven on by the student movement was radical in a root-and-branch sense. It reiterated themes with a longer history such as lay calls for the use of vernacular and the elimination of mystifying rites and rituals. But it framed these in a new way; for example, in terms of the abolition of the hierarchies of mental and manual labour.(34) There was the emergence of a new conception of the relationship between intellectuals and 'the masses'. Michel Foucault has written:

> 'A new mode of 'connection between theory and practice' has been established. Intellectuals have become accustomed to working not in the character of the 'universal' and the 'exemplary' ... but in specific sectors where they are situated by their professional conditions of work or their conditions of life ... And yet I believe they have become closer to the proletariat for two reasons: because it has been a matter of real, material, everyday struggles, and because they often came up against the same adversary, even though in a different form.'(35)

This change in the role of the intellectual can be seen in a number of fields. Most obviously, radicalised teachers in schools and universities found themselves having to work in new ways not only with students, but with parents and in the community.(36) A massive number of ex-students went into the profession in the early 1970's (the education system above all produced teachers) and took with them the ideas which they had fought for in the movement. The profession which more than any other had had the historical mission of creating generations of loyal Italians was joined by an army of 'subversives' with very different intentions. But other professions were similarly if less dramatically affected.

Radical doctors, for example, played a vital role in struggles over health and safety at work.(37) They put their specialised knowledge at the disposition of workers who were already defining health as psychic and social as well as a physical condition. Then, in the mid 1970's doctors participated in and supported the campaign for abortion. The women's movement, by developing a politics of the body, made Medicine a key arena of social conflict. It had far more profound implications for how Medicine was conceived as a system of knowledge and power than any previous movement.(38) But this was also an aspect of the fact that Medicine had become a crucial metaphor for the exercise of power in modern capitalist societies. The conflicts over the control of the body and over definitions of normality and deviancy suddenly grew in importance. The struggles of the 1960's such

as those over Psychiatry (which in Italy were associated with the work of Giovanni Jervis) were merely the anticipation of this.(39)

However, this section will focus on the battles in the legal profession. Students of Law, like students of Medicine, were traditionally conservative in their life-style and politics. They were almost exclusively from middle class backgrounds, and a large percentage had fathers in the profession.(40) They were, in other words, the classic '_figli di papa_' - 'daddy's sons'- but rarely his daughters. Nonetheless, Law students too were active in the movement (though it should be noted that a large number opposed it). At the State University of Milan they occupied the faculty, and were responsible for the kidnapping ('_sequestro_') of a Law professor, who was put on trial for his allegedly reactionary behaviour.(41) At both the Catholic and State Universities Law lecturers broke ranks and supported student occupations. As the mock celebration of the beginning of the legal year ('_anno giudiziario_') in 1969 showed, the pomp and circumstance of the Law did not go unquestioned. On the contrary, the Law was in the eye of the political storms of 1968-9.

To understand this development, it is worth putting it briefly into historical context. More so than in many countries, the legal system of the Italian state was an object of suspicion rather than veneration for wide sections of the population. Liberal-progressive intellectuals looked

back to Beccaria to ground their arguments against the persistance of Fascist penal codes, whilst popular antagonism to the Law as an institution could draw on a rich store of sayings and proverbs.(42) (There were divisions within the 'paese legale', but above all there was the divide between the 'paese legale' and the 'paese reale'.) The events of 1968-9 brought these divisions into the open.

The clashes between students and workers and the police were also clashes between different conceptions of law and order. Implicitly, the former made recourse to notions of 'natural justice' as embodied in the popular maxim of the time: 'It is right to rebel' ('È giusto ribellarsi'). Behind the contemporary justifications for revolt lay ideas about the rights of the poor to steal rather than suffer hunger and the rights of subjects to rise up against arbitrary government.(43) On the other side, the police were given the task of 'upholding' the law as it was defined in the statutes. Though applying the letter of the law or restoring law and order often entailed more than apprehending culprits. In 1968-9 it frequently involved administering punishment in the street. In other words, mass social conflict brought the question of the Law out of the court-room and into the piazza; and, vice versa, the passions and disputes of the streets were taken into the seats of judgement. The Law did not stand above conflicts but was invested by them.

It is an important feature of social movements that they seek to right wrongs in society as a whole. As Barrington

Moore has observed, the idea of injustice is intimately bound up with how the social contract is defined, as much informally as formally. The ordinary subject is also a legislator, and never more so than when participating in a social movement.(44) Nonetheless, a movement has to face the Law as an institution which imposes codes and practices. Movements, in brief, need lawyers.

The necessity of using the Law as well as to fight against it was made apparent in 1968-9 when charges were brought against tens of thousands of students and workers who had been involved in demonstrations, occupations and strikes. Lawyers were required to defend them, and to black attempts by employers and others to have certain forms of protest declared illegal. By the end of 1969 the 'campaign against repression' (as it was called) became a political priority. After the Piazza Fontana bombing there were widespread fears that civil liberties would be suspended and that the conditions would be prepared for a coup d'état. It was recognised that there were laws which had to be defended and extended so that the conditions favourable to political activity could be created. There were, therefore, ambiguities in the attitude of the social movements towards the Law as an institution. It appeared, on the one hand, as an instrument of capitalist rule, and on the other as civil rights. Whilst the radical lawyer or magistrate could only function because of the second conception, this was not automatically the assumption which informed his or her way of working.

In fact, two organisations - Soccorso Rosso and Magistratura Democratica - were set up in the early 1970's which expressed the different political approaches to the problem. It was a difference with far-reaching implications.

Soccorso Rosso (literally translated as Red Aid) was an organisation of professional people (lawyers, doctors and others) who gave their time and specialised skills to help victims of repression and oppression.(45) Its name, which was the same as that of an organisation founded in 1922 by the Third International to aid victims of reaction, points to its general political alignment. Although Soccorso Rosso combined different outlooks (much more so than a political party), it was primarily oriented towards using the Law in whatever way possible to defend the factory militant or political activists. It did not concern itself with changing the Law nor with campaigning around civil rights as a general political issue. Such an approach was mainly regarded as 'reformist'. The legal system as a system could, it was taught, only be changed by exposing it as the embodiment of class rule. The defence of the individual offered the opportunity to denounce class injustice. The only real justice was popular justice carried out in the class war. A number of activists in Soccorso Rosso saw their role of 'serving the people' in two senses; firstly, as the partial, limited and, in the long term, inconsequential defence of the accused; and secondly, in the construction of a 'people's justice', which entailed making the accused into

the accuser. Between 'bourgeois justice' and 'proletarian justice' there could be no meeting point. The idea of the Law as independent from politics was a fiction which could only be unmasked by openly subordinating law to politics with the dictatorship of the proletariat.(46)

Magistratura Democratica (literally translated as Democratic Magistrature) represented an approach which Soccorso Rosso deemed reformist. It was an organisation within the legal profession which sought change through and in the institutions.(47) It meant making the Law, as an institution, more responsive to the interests and the values expressed by the social movements. In other words, the Law had to be brought closer to the needs and aspirations of the '<u>paese reale</u>' and, therefore, detached from its associations with the ruling order. Magistratura Democratica organised a current of opinion which encouraged a more liberal interpretation of the law, and which canvassed legal reform. Among its successes can be counted the implementation of the 1970 Labour Charter; whilst in the post war period managements had enjoyed legal advantages and cooperation from judges, in the 1970's the legislation was successfully used by unions to protest workers' rights.(48) More generally, Magistratura Democratica had an important part in arguing the case for civil rights in the mid to late 1970's, when they came increasingly under attack from both Left and Right. It argued, moreover, that the Law as an autonomous institution was a necessary part of any strategy for radical social transformation if it was not to end up in totalitarianism.(49)

The experience of radicals working in the Law in the

years following 1968 seems to bear out Foucault's general observation about the changed role of intellectuals: namely, that they had more to gain and more to offer in the struggle against the dominant power structures in so far as they worked radically in their specific situations. It can perhaps be judged one of the more positive aspects of the cultural revolution. The mark of radical teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers and others increased knowledge and awareness of the new complexities and forms of power within society.

The ideas of cultural revolution inspired by Chinese examples went into eclipse by the mid 1970's. Its notions of 'popular culture', of the relationship of intellectuals to 'masses', and of what a utopian society would look like, had become barriers to understanding and action. It would be wrong, however, to simply dismiss them as irrelevant. The negative, guilt-creating as well as the positive, liberating experiences taught activists a great deal. The answers proposed along Chinese lines resulted in a moralistic and dogmatic cultural politics, but the questions raised about how to change society remained crucial. Whilst the project of sending students into the fields, and peasants into the universities, was not practicable or meaningful in a modern industrial society, the utopian impulse to be free of the hierarchies and divisions of a class society kept its significance.

FOOTNOTES: PART 3

Chapter 14

1. Pierre Bourdieu, 'The production of belief; contribution to an economy of symbolic goods', in Media, Culture and Society, 2, p. 288.

2. The student movement along with the other movements of the 1960's were important for how the mass media were studied. New approaches to media analysis were developed by radicals; see Giovanni Bechelloni, La Macchina Culturale in Italia (Bologna, 1974).

3. Students, inspired by the German movement's attacks on the Springer press buildings in Berlin, demonstrated against the Corriere della Sera. A student leaflet noted that the 'picket against disinformation' ended in 252 arrests. It claimed that student violence was a response to the violence of the system as manifested in the schools, factories and media. Calling students 'hooligans' is described as a form of violence; State University leaflet (undated).

4. Emilio Tiberi, La Contestazione Murale (Bologna, 1972), pp. 105-125.

5. For an account of the influence of Marcusean ideas within the student movement see S. Sidotti, 'Emancipazione e politiche culturali negli anni 60: Marcuse in Italia', in Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia, 2, April-June 1974.

6. See Emilio Tiberi, La Contestazione Murale, pp. 105-125; and Corriere della Sera (10-1-71).

7. See Patrizia Violi, I giornali dell'estrema sinistra (Milan, 1977).

8. For an account of events, see Chapter also Camilla Cederna, Una finestra sulla strage (Milan, 1971) and Piero Scaramucci, Licia Pinella: una storia quasi soltanto mia (Milan, 1982).

9. G. Bechelloni, 'The journalist as political client in Italy', in A. Smith (Ed.), Newspapers and Democracy (London, 1980).

10. For example, Licia Pinelli recalls that Pasolini approached her about making a film about her husband's death, and how she was 'adopted' by liberal-progressive circles in Milan; P. Scaramucci, Licia Pinelli, p. 125.

11. Students invaded the Pesoro film festival and issued manifestos on what radical film-making should involve; see G. Fofi, Il cinema italiano: servi e padroni (Milan, 1971), pp. 81-6.

    The Venice Biennale and few of lesser events were also targets of attack by art students and radical artists. The French led the way, and in France the debate on film and culture was richer than in Italy; for an account, see Sylvia Harvey, May '68 and Film Culture (London, 1978).

12. G. Fofi, Il cinema italiano, p. 12.

13. Franca Rame, Introduction in Dario Fo, We can't pay? We won't pay! (London, 1978), p. VI.

14. Ibid., pp. VII-XII.

15. 'Dario Fo à Vincennes' in Cahiers du Cinema, 250, May 1974, p. 20.

16. Ibid., pp. 20-1. Dario Fo's Mistero Buffo is a daring example of his ideas in practice; the play invents a language out of the dialects of the Po valley.

17. Ibid., p. 22.

18. Ibid., p. 24.

19. This was written by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi. Others who studied and visited China, writing about their experiences include Edoarda Masi, Rossana Rossanda and Lisa Foa. Pier Paolo Pasolini and Dario Fo were among those in the world of culture who were especially attracted by the Chinese myth.

    Umberto Melotti, 'La vera natura della societa cinese e le contraddizioni della nuova sinistra italiana', in Terzo Mondo (December), 1975, p. 60.

20. Ibid.

21. See Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media' in Denis McQuail (Ed.), Sociology of Mass Communications (London, 1972). Gian Carlo Ferretti has written how the battle of the 'organised workers' movement' 'per una cultura popolare' was lost. The mass market continued to be dominated by literary genres such as romance, crime and thriller stories produced by the major publishers. Communist Party intellectuals competed within the terms of the divide between the 'two cultures' which they did not substantially attack. The publishers of the New Left likewise made no inroads into the mass market, and remained in a ghetto. The cultural divides were even greater if it is borne in mind that relatively few Italians read books or newspapers at all; see Gian Carlo Ferretti, Il mercato delle lettere (Turin, 1979), esp. pp. 19-50.

But antagonism towards 'pop culture' (as opposed to 'popular culture') was common to working class militants in the post '68 years. An article entitled 'Let's talk about culture' in a factory paper contrasts a song of the rice pickers ('mondine') with the pop song of Celentano called 'Who doesn't work, doesn't make love' ('Chi non lavora, non fa l'amore'): 'Whilst the first song is characterised by concreteness, truth and humanity, the second is evidence only of a defeatist and couldn't-care-less ('qualunquista') mentality'; in Voce del Lavoratore (Bolletino unitario del Consiglio di Fabbrica: Sit Siemens) 1970.

22. Perry Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism (London, 1976), pp. 95-6.

23. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, The Hidden Injuries of Class (Cambridge, 1972), p. 5.

24. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

25. Stefano Merli, 'Per un nuovo modo di fare ricerca storica', in Fabbrica e Stato, July-August 1973, p. 82. For further explanation of the 150 Hours scheme, see Part 2 Chapter 21, Pp.

26. Interview with Giuseppe Magni, a course-organiser in Milan from the inception of the 150 Hours scheme (April, 1978).

27. The hidden history of the 150 Hours scheme is very different from its official version. Like much of what goes on in class-rooms it remains a private affair between students and teachers. But unlike the school situation, the workers were half-way between being students and themselves being the teachers of the teachers. It created a confusion of roles and a meeting of cultures which opened up great possibilities for experimentation, but which often led to disillusionment.

28. Luigi Manconi, Nuovo, difficile: una proposta bibliografica sulla produzione culturale delle ultime generazioni, a cura delle librerie Feltrinelli, June, 1979, p. 22.

29. For example, Goffredo Fofi writes of late Rossellini films: 'Rossellini passes from the estatic flowers where a half-wit St. Francis raises his hymn to God and the DC, to Mediterranean locations where Ingrid Bergman finds him (God, that is) in the mouths of volcanoes or in the lava at Pompeii'. G. Fofi, Il cinema italiano, p. 72.

30. L. Manconi, Nuovo, difficile, pp. 22-3.

31. G. Fofi, 'Piccola editoria', p. 77.

32. Ibid., p. 78.

33. In the late 1970's and early '80's a number of episodes from the momentous to the banal signalled the subtle shifts and the jolts in opinion which brought the 'generation of '68' to turn their backs on their own history. The ascendancy of red terrorism was the most important single development, but analyses need also to note how the tone of articles in L'Espresso changes. For example, the coining of the word 'sinistrese' to describe a certain Left wing vocabulary and style of speech and then its rapid adoption indexed a significant change in attitudes; see Paolo Flores d'Arcais, 'Dizionario dei luoghi comuni della sinistra' in L'Espresso (19-12-76).

34. This theme recurs throughout the debates during and following the movements of 1968-9. The Chinese model played a crucial role in 'proving' that divisions of labour could be broken down if politics was put 'in command'. The review Vento dell'Este, for example, published Mao's 'Charter for the Anshan steelworks' and other documents to show this; see E. Reyneri, 'La lotta per la produzione e l'organizzazione del lavoro nelle fabbriche cinesi', in Vento dell'Este, 23, 1971. Some on the Left thought that the Chinese model was not applicable in the West, but nonetheless regarded divisions of labour as the most significant definers of class society. Michele Salvati and Bianca Beccalli proposed a socialist strategy which involved: 1) elimination of forms of work; 2) job rotation where possible; 3) expansion of the technical/scientific sector subject to democratic controls; 4) recomposition of jobs. They suggested that society had a choice between prioritising how work was done or how much was produced. This was a sober version of utopianism; see M. Salvati and B. Beccalli, 'Divisione del lavoro: capitalismo, socialismo, utopia', in Quaderni Piacentini, 40, 1970.

35. Michel Foucault, 'Truths and Power', in Meagan Morris (Ed.), Power, Truth, Strategy (Darlington, Australia, 1979), p. 42.

36. See the reflections and initiatives of the Erba Voglio collective in Milan, Elvio Fachinelli (Ed.), L'Erba Voglio - pratica non autoritaria nella scuola (Turin, 1971).

37. See Prof. Vito Foa, 'La tutela della salute nell'ambiento di lavoro', in Fabbrica e Salute: alti della conferenza nazionale CGIL-CSIL-UIL (Rome, 1972), pp. 207-209; Giovanni Jervis, 'Condizione operaia e nervosi' in Inchiesta, 10 (1973).

38. A landmark was the translation and publication of the Boston Women's Health Collective's Our Bodies Ourselves in Turin in 1970. A women's catalogue of 1980 listed over 80 books under the heading 'Our Body'; Librellula Liberia delle Donne Catalogo (Bologna, 1980). Women had been largely excluded from the most prestigious professions, so the 1970's were also important as a period in which women were becoming doctors and lawyers.

39. Michel Foucault's work has made a vital contribution to the understanding of these developments. See M. Foucault, Madness and Civilization (New York, 1973).

40. Guido Martinotti, Gli studenti universitari (Milan, 1969), p. 55.

41. The Trimarchi affair is interesting as an example of the student movement's application of Chinese-style Cultural Revolution in Italy. The idea was to elicit public confessions from reactionaries and wrong-doers, making them reply to accusations coming from their victims. Thus the peasant would enumerate the landlord's cruelties. Trimarchi, however, did not play according to the rules and argued his case. Subsequently students were brought to trial in the 'normal' way. See Corriere della Sera (10-3-69; 22-3-69).

42. In Italy policemen have for a long time been the butt of popular jokes. These can be compared to the British jokes in which the Irish figure as stupid and ignorant. Since many policemen are recruited in the South, there is undoubtedly a small element of racism in the Italian jokes too, but they are told with equal enthusiasm in South and North.

43. The whole range of justifications is to be found where radicals were attempting to argue with those people who were more familiar with words than actions as weapons for use in conflicts, or who were steeped in liberal ideas about conflict-resolution. Students at the Catholic University needed to be persuaded whilst a worker from the Pirelli factory, or a communist usually took the arguments for granted.

44. Antonio Gramsci wrote perceptively of this broad conception of the Law; A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp. 265-266.

45. Rocco Ventre, a noted lawyer and member of Soccorso Rosso, defined its role: 'it helps the accused in plain daylight ('alla luce del sole'), in the context of the rights guaranteed by the penal code which is their only protection from physical harm'; La Repubblica (21-5-80).

46. Although it should be made clear that Soccorso Rosso contained a range of political opinions, among these there was a current favourable to the armed organisations on the Left. In 1976 Soccorso Rosso was responsible for editing a collection of Red Brigades documents, which it introduced as a contribution to dispassionate debate, whilst making clear: 'For their origins, their political practice and for what they have written we recognise them as comrades, and when reaction attacks them we are at their side ... which means offering them militant help including, though it is the least important, legal aid'; Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse (Milan, 1976), p. 5. Whatever the organisational connections a 'red thread' of shared beliefs ran between some members of Soccorso Rosso and the Red Brigades. Above all, they shared a conception of popular justice which modelled itself on Chinese practices but did not stop at applying the ruthlessness of a Stalinist show-trial. See Part 5, Chapter 23, pp. 496.

47. Alberto Melucci, 'Vers un système de relations professionnelles en Italie', in Sociologie de travail, 1, 1976, pp. 397-400.

48. Statuto dei lavoratori: un bilancio politico (Bari, 1977), pp. 30-3.

49. Luigi Ferrajoli and Danilo Zolo, Democrazia autoritoria e capitalismo maturo (Milan, 1978).

PART 4

THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

Introduction

After a period of relative quiescence in the workplace, the years 1968-9 were turbulent. The scale of industrial conflict during the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 made it the third largest strike movement recorded in history in terms of lost working time (after, that is, the May 1968 general strike in France, and the British 1926 general strike). However, Italian workers not only withdrew their labour on a massive scale, but challenged the organisation of work and the system of authority within the factory. In some cases, workers rebelled against the factory system itself and its hold over their lives. Industrial workers created a movement which overturned many of the rules and assumptions governing everyday behaviour and the regulation of conflict.

The following chapters will attempt to answer why it was that in Italy industrial conflict took on such radical forms; why it was that workers defied managements and rejected negotiation; why questions of pay and conditions turned into sources of a more general attack on social injustices. Some of the answers, as has been seen, lie in the longer history of class conflict in Italy, which made the factory a site of political and social antagonisms.(1) However, the social movement itself drew on and interpreted those traditional antagonisms in new ways. It is necessary to see how the movement developed in its early stages to understand its most

dramatic manifestations during the 'Hot Autumn'. Although description and analysis will focus on the autumn '69 struggles, the first chapters will deal with the mobilisations, starting in early 1968.

The movement's development can be divided into roughly four phases, and the chapters are organised accordingly.(2) In the first phase of mobilisations, which was given a fillip by the turn-out for the general strike over pensions in March 1968, workers took action and made demands along fairly normal lines. In the second phase, which covered the period from autumn 1968 to spring 1969, industrial conflict took an unprecedented turn when workers organised themselves independently of the unions and resorted to forms of direct action. However, the conflicts tended to be localised until the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 when different struggles converged in action over national contracts. After the signing of the agreements, a fourth phase followed. It is more difficult to date, but can be characterised as the period of the movement's institutionalisation.

The chapters are organised chronologically to chart the phases of the movement's development. Thus, Chapter 15 deals with the first signs of revolt in the workplaces, whilst Chapter 21 outlines the processes of institutionalisation. However, they also examine certain exemplary cases of industrial militancy such as the Pirelli company disputes in Milan (Chapter 16), white collar agitation (Chapter 17), and the Turin events (Chapter 18). These respectively raise the issues of the development of grass-roots organisations, the

role of the so-called 'new working class', and the 'refusal' of the factory system. Whilst the focus is on Milanese developments, these are put in a national context, and the workers' movement is assessed more generally in terms of its role in representing oppositional forces in society.

CHAPTER 15: BREAKING THE ICE: SPRING-SUMMER 1968

The term '*maggio strisciante*' was coined to describe the development of social and industrial conflict in Italy in 1968-9. Literally translated as the 'drawn-out May', it points to how the movement in the workplaces was a process stretching over months, rather than a phenomenon identifiable with a major event. Whereas in France a massive general strike followed a student insurrection, in Italy the social crisis was more diffused and prolonged; a series of conflicts, from the '*jacquerie*' of the Marzotta factories of Valdagno in late March, to the street battles between Fiat workers and police in Turin in July 1969 (episodes which will be dealt with in the following chapters), marked important shifts in the development of industrial and social conflict. The student movement had important consequences for setting the stage and heightening social expectations, but these resulted from the continuous mobilisations rather than from any particular confrontation.

The most significant single event in the early stages of the movement was not a spontaneous revolt, but the March 7th general strike over pension reform organised by the CGIL. It coincided with the parliamentary debate on the subject, and followed the breakdown of the negotiations with the government which had first justified the postponement of the strike in November 1967. The other Confederations withdrew from strike action at the last minute, but participation was not limited to CGIL members. Mobilisation in Milan involved 300,000 engineering workers alone. It signalled a radical change of

mood in the workplaces; Rina Barbieri recalls:

> 'There was something in the air that pushed workers to take back what they had lost in the last few years ... the strike for pensions, that's what happened in 1968 that really changed me and other comrades ... there was a huge participation far beyond our expectations, including that of the white collar workers ... it was an issue that affected everyone, through their fathers and so on ... it was a strike that frightened everyone including the union.'(3)

The strike had a special significance because it expressed a surge of unity from below, and protest against the Centre Left government. It was also a sign of general moral outrage at the treatment of pensioners. Despite the recalcitrance of the CISL and the UIL, workers belonging to those Confederations joined the action. In Milan the FIM-CISL defiantly called for participation, and, in addition, many non-unionised workers took part. The ideological differences that divided the official organisations were shown to count for less among ordinary workers than they did among their representatives. Disillusionment with the government's capacity to introduce reforms made strike action the only alternative. At this point, it was still largely conceived of in terms of applying pressure on the State from below, but the scale of mobilisation revealed a new-found strength which militants channelled into collective bargaining. The expansion of the welfare sector, which was meagre in Italy by comparison with other Western European countries, remained an objective of the movement. However, industrial action in the workplace had the advantage of giving quick and tangible results, which

could not be expected from Italian governments.

Company Collective Bargaining

The early months of 1968 saw the development of collective bargaining to a degree not experienced since 1960-61, reaching the highest level in the post war period.(4) The phenomenon of 'wage drift' - the difference between nationally fixed wages and those won through company and plant bargaining - was a normal feature of most other advanced capitalist economies, but it was new in the Italian situation. Here national contracts for each sector and a highly centralised bargaining apparatus set limits to local agreements. Traditionally industrial conflict coincided with the calendar of contract renewals, which were usually every three years. The movement of decentralised bargaining, which sprang up mainly in the larger factories of the manufacturing sector on rank-and-file initiatives, therefore had a peculiarly destabilising impact on industrial relations, causing problems for the unions as well as for managements. In 1968 a conjunction of factors combined to produce the first signs of a movement of shopfloor rebellion, which gathered momentum in the course of the year.

The first conflicts developed around traditional issues. The key demand coming from workers was for wage increases. Since 1963 real wages had been in decline. Although no formal incomes policy had been implemented in Italy, governments' deflationary policies had effectively curtailed wages by

weakening bargaining power. Firstly, the postponement of the engineering workers' contract (the pace-setter for other sectors) from 1965 to 1966, and then the meagreness of the 5% increase stretched over 3 years (conceded in 1966) lowered living standards.(5) Production rose steadily after 1964 but without proportionally reducing unemployment, and profits recovered dramatically. In particular, companies were able to raise prices because of favourable international conditions, and to benefit from an inflation which reduced real wages. Then, payment systems within factories were changed to remove or lessen wage-linking to productivity.(6)

Resentment over wages had already shown itself in 1966 during the struggle for the renewal of the engineering workers' contract. In the aftermath, there was considerable bitterness at the way unions had signed the contract prematurely (it was labelled a '<u>contratto bidone</u>', a 'rubbish agreement'). The disproportion between the scale of mobilisation and the paltry results was especially great because of the cost of strikes to the workers themselves. There was no system of strike pay or State benefits for strikers' families in Italy. A protagonist recalls:

> 'You remembered the preceding contract when they called for a truce and negotiations went on for three months without coming to anything ... as a result there was enormous anger among workers.'(7)

In 1967 there was widespread discouragement and loss of confidence, especially among activists on the shopfloor. This was not dispelled until the general strike in March,

which showed the growth of a new awareness of bargaining power among workers. Explanations of this change point to two developments; firstly, to the consequences of a spurt in production because of a buoyant international market; and secondly, to the changed position of workers in relation to the labour market.

Until the beginning of 1968 production increased without significant recourse to additional labour. Then for two years 'manning' levels rose, especially in the engineering sector. Fears over job security subsided, and workers found themselves in a position to ask for wage increases, taking advantage of changes in the production process to press their case. At Alfa Romeo, which had two car plants in the Milan area, the lively commercial boom began in 1968; in the first nine months sales increased by 36.6% with respect to 1967. The increase was determined and, in turn, determined a continuous reorganisation of the labour process; the intensification of line-speeds and continuous technological innovations provoked stoppages and strikes. But the company, in its concern to maintain continuity of production, was prepared to make concessions to prevent strikes.(8)

Although employment rose in 1968, employment in industry over the year did not increase much above its 1964 level. In other words, explanations linking bargaining directly to employment levels are inadequate. It was not the removal of a 'reserve army of unemployed' that unleashed industrial militancy, as in 1959-60. Rather, it was the blocking of that

mechanism due to the 'compartmentalisation' of the labour market. Industry no longer required raw recruits from the countryside, as it had done in the 1950's. From 1963 Italian capitalism entered a phase of 'precocious maturity' characterised by the demand for a new type of labour power; Massimo Paci has written:

> 'the workers required are those who possess certain qualities: they must be men, not too young and not too old; preferably they are married, have a certificate from the lower secondary school and have already been socialised into an urban-industrial environment.'(9)

Those made redundant in the mid '60's - youth, women and older workers - were not therefore the type of labour needed to sustain the heavier workloads and speed-up of production. Furthermore, the limited intersectoral movement of labour and the tendency to stay on at school in order to escape the prospect of manual work increased the difficulties of the employers in finding the right kind of new employee. In Milan and the industrial triangle the difficulties were especially great.(10)

The change in the market position of semi-skilled workers explains the spread of collective wage bargaining. The unions pursued increases in production bonuses and piece rates. The Milan area had a leading role in clocking up agreements. L'Unità reported in late April that in three months 60 engineering companies had been in dispute in the Province of Milan, and that in four to five months 100 agreements had been signed, covering 70,000 workers, mainly in the large factories.(11)

L'Unità reports in April and May speak regularly of thousands of workers in dispute and of the 'leap-frog' effect of agreements. They give the impression of a harmonious relationship between workers and unions going forward together; 'the agreements are the fruit of constant and massive pressure by the workers and exemplary organisation and guidance by the unions'.(12) The unions did show flexibility; they promoted strike action during negotiations in the wake of workers' spontaneous refusal to abide by the traditional truce for talks. Where the unions were strong (in the Milanese area unionism had survived the worst effects of management repression and the CGIL had kept its majority position), bargaining was orderly, and often did not go beyond the threat of action, as in the case of Alfa Romeo.(13) Moreover, the demand for more money was a traditional demand that could be channelled without difficulty.

However, the most significant industrial conflicts for the future development of the workers' movement took place where unions were weak or unable to articulate the demands of the workers, and where continuities with the paternalist/repressive industrial relations of the 1950's were greatest. In these instances, wider issues concerning management powers and authority were at stake. Nationally, the struggles at Marzotto, at Fiat in Turin, and at Montedison of Porto Marghera were particularly important. Within the Milan area there were no equivalent rebellions, but an examination of particular factories is useful in showing the dynamic of the shopfloor movement.

Rebellion at Marzotto, Fiat and Montedison

On the 19th April workers from the textile factories of Valdagno in the Veneto pulled down the statue of Gaetano Marzotto from its pedestal in the town square. Throughout April and May Fiat workers in Turin took industrial action in pursuit of a company agreement for the first time since 1954. At Montedison's Porto Marghera petrochemical plant wildcat strikes in the spring led up to months of confrontations in which workers showed themselves ready to destroy plant by totally withdrawing their labour. Each of these moments of conflict made headline news and symptomised a radicalisation among workers that went beyond the demand for wage increases alone.

The insurrection of Valdagno had many of the characteristics of a '*jacquerie*'.[14] What started as a series of stoppages over work conditions beginning in late 1967, escalated into a total strike which was followed by a lock-out in April. The street battles which followed involved the call-up of police from Padua and the participation of university students from Padua and Trento. It was an exemplary case of a struggle against a paternalist system in a company-town. Resentment over exploitation in the factory rapidly grew into a rebellion against a virtual 'truck-shop' system, and against the symbols of the Marzotto family's dynastic rule. Although the particular form of the rebellion was isolated, and had parallels in the assault of municipal buildings in the South rather than in the conflicts of the industrialised North, its significance was more than picturesque and symbolic.

Firstly, the paternalism at Marzotto was an extreme case of a type of *régime* that continued to be more than a residual form of industrial relations in Italy, especially in the 'white' areas (areas of strong Catholic traditions and support for the Christian Democrat Party). Secondly, the rebellion had also been against the local 'moderate' CISL union, and became a point of reference for radical elements in that union. Thirdly, the events of Valdagno came a fortnight after the Valle Giulia street-fighting between students and police in Rome. They highlighted the repressive intervention of the State in industrial disputes, and underlined the new unity between students and workers. It was the period when the theme of the legitimacy and political value of 'proletarian violence' was much debated.

The strikes at Fiat over piece-rates were not marked by particular innovations in either the demands or forms of action. Their importance lay rather in the fact that a long period of inaction had ended. Events at Fiat had great symbolic importance. In the post war period, the elections to the Internal Commissions at Fiat were reported as if they had been general elections, and the clashes of Piazza Statuto in 1962 had been interpreted as the first sign of a new type of working class insubordination. Sections of the student movement and political groupings in Turin took the strikes in the spring as a cue for intervention in support of workers' struggles.(15)

At Porto Marghera, an industrial estate at Mestre where the Montedison petrochemical plants employed 15,000 people,

disputes over grading in the spring, and then over a production bonus in July, became exemplary instances of industrial action in the most advanced technological sectors. The high capital intensity and the continuous production process at the plants made them particularly liable to disruption. Against the wishes of the unions, which felt obliged to honour the 'peace formula' in the 1966 contract, independent mass meetings called strikes on alternate days. In July pickets prevented maintenance men from entering, thereby risking the destruction of the plant by their refusal to identify with the interests of the company. Throughout the disputes decisions were taken by open meetings, which shortcircuited the unions. More heed was paid to proposals coming from the political group, Potere Operaio, and from students than to union officials. In response to a management offer of a 1.5% production bonus increase, workers took up Potere Operaio's call for a 5,000 lire increase for all. The ideas of workers' autonomy theorised by the 'operaist'groups, seemed to have its practical demonstration. According to these, the struggles exemplified the autonomy of self-organisation and the autonomy of workers' forms of action and objectives from the cycle of capital. In other words, workers' action was not thought to be recuperable either by unions or by the company. This version of 'workers' autonomy' ('autonomia operaia'),which was first theorised by Mario Tronti and others in the mid '60's, gained credibility and influence. Its promulgators canvassed action that escaped union control and introduced a revolutionary perspective into industrial disputes.(16)

Milan Area

A correlation of the degree of conflict in industrial disputes in 24 engineering companies in the Milan area, with the presence of the FIOM, shows a correspondence between relatively weak unionisation and high levels of conflict. In these cases, the discontent over the erosion of real wages was particularly great because managements had minimised bargaining and cut down piece-rates whilst increasing work-loads, thereby taking advantage of the weak organisation and division of the workforce. In the more favourable bargaining situation of early 1968 there were outbreaks of often violent action.(17) A brief outline of events in some of the Province of Milan's main engineering factories during the spring of 1968 will give a picture of the early mobilisations.

Magneti Marelli

The Magneti Marelli light-engineering factories at Crescenzago had a workforce of 4,000 in 1968.(18) A fifth was composed of skilled fitters, 'checkers' and maintenance men, whilst the majority of workers, 40% of whom were women in the lowest two grades, did 'parcellised' and repetitive jobs on automated and semi-automated machines on production lines. In 1960-62 the workers of Magneti Marelli played a leading role in the strike movement, but the management had used the recession to reimpose hierarchical control from above. A measure of its success was the fact that heavy overtime was being worked at a time when workers were being temporarily

laid off ('cassa integrazione'). Attempts at industrial action were met with lock-outs, and wages were held down through failures to honour agreements, aided and abetted by the only recognised union, the UILM.

The end of lay-offs, the take-on of workers and the success of the pension reform strike put new heart into both workers and unions, but the radical impetus to the strikes for wages and bilateral assessment of payments came from the newly employed young male workers. This group had no fear of management and was angry over the disparity between their qualifications and the de-skilled nature of the jobs they found themselves in. Moreover they suffered from discrimination; because of their age they received lower wages for the same work as done by older workers. When students at the factory gates called for a march to the city centre, the young workers took up the idea and made the unions accept it at an open meeting. It was the students with their experience of demonstrations rather than the unions who organised the march from Magneti Marelli, which was the first since 1949. However, the formation of an 'autonomous grouping' outside the unions was too weak to promote alternative initiatives. The 20 days of strikes ending in an agreement in May did not drastically alter the balance of forces in the workplace, though they led to greater bargaining activity, and hence the recognition of the unions.

Innocenti

The Innocenti company at Lambrate was divided into three

separate factories; one heavy engineering (with just over 1,000 manual workers and 700 white collar); the Lambretta motor vehicle plant (with 1400 workers); and the car factory (with 1,500 workers).[19] Each factory was very different in terms of economic situation, labour processes, the composition and traditions of the workforce, and these provided the conditions for the diverse timing and trajectories of mobilisations. In early 1968 it was the heavy engineering factory with its highly skilled male workers, who averaged 40 years of age and were of Northern origin, who took action rather than the young, semi-skilled Southern workers of the car factory. Traditionally the former had not been militant. They had enjoyed some of the benefits of the paternalist/repressive system at Innocenti, (such as high overtime rates and 'merit awards'), because of the relative scarcity of their skills. They were proud of being skilled. The turn to industrial action in 1968 was provoked by attacks on their privileges. Production increases were sought by management through the introduction of night shifts and the employment of additional skilled workers at higher rates. During an episode of drunken bravura a worker told a manager that they wanted 100 lire an hour more, and instantly, 'like a spark in straw' ('una scintilla in un pagliaio'), the word spread, bringing the heavy engineering factory to a stop. In the ensuing dispute the workers responded to a breakdown in negotiations with spontaneous acts of violence; 'internal marches' in the factory and offices drove out the white collar workers, the

majority of whom opposed the strike, smashed windows and organised mass pickets. Finally they went on all-out strike ('sciopero ad oltranza') until the signing of an agreement. From the beginning to the end, the timing and forms of action and the main demands came about 'spontaneously' in the sense that the unions followed the decisions which had already been taken. However, the 'autonomy' shown by the workers of the heavy engineering factory was of a limited kind. Above all it showed a power based on the solidarity, bargaining position and sense of independence of the skilled workers. The intervention of political groups from outside (Potere Operaio) met with no response, and the strikes did not break the repressive climate in the car factory where most workers were not skilled.

Autobianchi

The Autobianchi car factory at Desio had about 2,600 employees.(20) An unusually low percentage of these were skilled due to the importation of 'kits' for the 'Mini' from Britain, which meant that there was mainly a requirement for assembly work. The siting of the factory in a 'white area' was part of a deliberate policy of excluding trade unions from the plants, and in the 1960's a paternalist régime prevailed. The level of conflict remained low and there was little bargaining activity since management preferred to take decisions unilaterally. In 1968 a big expansion of production, intolerable speed-ups of the line and grievances over hours (which were longer than in other companies in the sector and did not include the payment of lunch-breaks) fuelled shopfloor

discontent. However, the crucial change in the situation resulted from the take-over of Autobianchi by Fiat, since workers took the opportunity to demand parity of conditions with their other factories.

In mid February 1968, after the refusal of parity with Fiat, the Internal Commission organised strike action. The workers' response was unprecedented in terms of participation and militancy. In March there were lightning strikes instead of the traditional 24 hour stoppage; mass pickets prevented entry to the factory and the cars of two 'scabs' ('crumiri'), who climbed over the wall, were set on fire. Anger over the white collar workers' refusal to join the strike ended in the invasion of the offices and destruction of office equipment. On one occasion, the personnel manager, who had a reputation for terrorising employees, was dragged into a field. A worker recalls: 'He stayed in the rain for two hours whilst workers threw insults and punches at him; it was unbelievable'. Violent incidents followed the breakdown of talks and attempted lock-outs but the agitation otherwise remained under union control. The leading activists within the factory were the skilled workers of the fitting shops ('reparti di preparazione') and their concern for wages rather than for conditions prevailed in the formulation of demands, which were mostly met in an agreement drawn up in April.

Sit Siemens

Sit Siemens, a State-controlled company, was the biggest Italian enterprise in the telecommunications sector and enjoyed

a monopoly position in the market.[21] Unlike most engineering companies, it had been in continuous expansion during the recession of the mid '60's and had almost doubled its output between 1960 and 1968 due to the telephone boom and switch to STD. The number of employees rose by 600 between 1967 and 1968 to reach 7,900. In 1969 there were 8,550. They were employed at factories in Milan and Castelletto. 51% were women workers who were engaged in mass production and assembly work, 30% were skilled male workers with jobs in fitting, maintenance and testing, and there was a section of semi-skilled men engaged in heavier production work. There were technicians in the laboratories at Castelletto, while the majority of clerical workers were in Milan. The workforce was highly stratified according to the organisation of the labour process, and this was reflected in its relationship to the unions. Among the women workers there were high turn-over rates and low levels of unionisation, whilst the core of the union membership and leadership was found among the securely employed skilled men.

Unlike the other engineering factories which experienced outbursts of militancy in the early months of 1968, Sit Siemens management was not known for repressive and paternalistic practices. However, the gap in representation between the union and the shopfloor meant that mobilisation took uncontrolled forms, especially through the autonomous action of different shopfloors. Already in 1966 a strike committee had been organised independently of the union during the national

contract dispute and had managed to promote an embarrassing demonstration at the Milan Trade Fair. Although this grouping disintegrated after the signing of the contract, it had effectively identified the main grievances, especially those of the women workers; these resulted from speed-ups which provoked exhaustion and even hysteria, and worsening conditions of work. The cuts in the piece-rates (by an average 6% over 1967) aggravated resentment over the poor 1966 agreement, which had allowed productivity increases without doing much to improve wages.

The failure of a strike call over production bonuses in November 1967 showed that the majority of workers were concerned about conditions rather than the question of pay in itself. A member of the Internal Commission explained: '(the workers) told us: what we take with the right hand is taken away from the left by the bosses who cut the time on the piece-rate'. Demands drawn up and presented to management in February 1968 were the first attempt by the unions to confront the different conditions of work in the various sections of the factories. Upgrading for workers in the lowest grades, the elimination of health hazards and bargaining over the fixing of piece-rates were all issues that evoked a crescendo of participation in strikes. These were organised at shop level and included 'internal marches' and invasions of the offices. Particularly surprising was the participation of about 30% of the white collar workers, despite their exclusion in drafting the demands. Although the agreement

reached between management and the unions was considered inadequate ('extra money from piece-rate changes can only buy another cup of coffee a day'), no effective proposition emerged because the Internal Commission's bargaining position and prestige among the mass of workers was greatly reinforced.

From developments in Milan and elsewhere it is possible to make some observations on the first phase of workers' mobilisations. These can be grouped in terms of the demands, forms of struggle and organisation, and leading protagonists involved.

The main demand in this period was for greater production bonuses and revised piece-rates; demands for union rights and better working conditions remained secondary. In other words, workers sought to improve their situation within the existing pay structures and working arrangements. The only new element was the demand for across-the-board lump sum pay increases. To begin with, it was put forward without any particular gloss, but it quickly acquired anti-capitalist connotations, especially in the eyes of '<u>operaist</u>' theorists. Its great advantages were seen to be its egalitarian effect of benefitting all workers whilst reducing differentials, and the fact that it was easily understood by everyone, and did not require the mathematical expertise required to work out percentage wage increases.

The forms of industrial action in this first phase showed a continuity with past practices. Workers left the workplace during stoppages and carried on the dispute from

the outside. However, some things had changed; picketing had become more violent; there was an increase in the number of demonstrations, and these often involved student participation; there were no more truces for negotiations. In this period, the workers acted through the unions, the most dramatic exception being the independent mass meetings at Porto Marghera. However, there were straws in the wind which suggested that workers were dissatisfied with their representatives. The feeble implantation of the unions in many factories, and the relative isolation of the Internal Commissions, meant that they had inadequate channels through which to feel the pulse of the workplace. This was especially delibitating when many union officials were frightened of the risks of defeat, and sceptical about the spirit of militancy.

The leading protagonists in the mobilisations tended to be the skilled workers, who were often also the more politicised and unionised. Certainly, they enjoyed more bargaining power than other groups. In certain instances, as at Innocenti, they used their advantages to benefit themselves alone, but skilled workers were among the radical leaders at Porto Marghera. However, the prominance of these workers was related to the timidity of the semi-skilled, who were less experienced and confident, and whose interests were inadequately represented by the unions. It was not until the autumn and spring of 1968-9 that these workers acted independently in pursuit of their own interests.

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 15

1. See Chapter 5.

2. This periodisation is based on that found in Ida Regalia, Marino Regini and Emilio Reyneri, 'Conflitti di lavoro e relazioni industriali in Italia, 1968-75', in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno, Conflitti in Europa (Milan, 1977).

3. Rina Barbieri interview.

4. Michele Salvati, 'Slittamento salariale e sindacato con riferimenti all'industria metalmeccanica, 1954-69' in Rassegna Economica, 6, 1970, pp. 1397-1442.

5. D. Soskice, 'Le relazioni industriali nelle società occidentali' in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno, Conflitti in Europa, pp. 394-396.

6. M. Salvati, Il sistema economico italiano, pp. 40-1.

7. Rina Barbieri interview.

8. A. Sandretti, Lotte all'Alfa Romeo, 1970-73, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, 1973, p. 31.

9. M Paci, Mercato di lavoro, p. 275.

10. M. Paci, L'evoluzione dell'occupazione in Lombardia e la mobilità delle forze di lavoro (Milan, 1968), pp. 15-61.

11. L'Unità (23-4-68).

12. L'Unità (10-5-68).

13. Emilio Reyneri, 'Maggio strisciante', p. 85.

14. E. Reyneri, 'Comportamento di classe e nuovo ciclo di lotte', in Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 1974/5, pp. 850-860; G. Viale, Il sessantotto, pp. 148-149; Vittorio Foa, Sindacati e lotte operaie, pp. 164-166.

15. For interesting autobiographical accounts, see Red Notes, Working Class Autonomy, pp. 167-203.

16. E. Pasetto and G. Pupillo, 'Il gruppo 'Potere Operaio' nelle lotte di Porto Marghera', in Classe, 3, 1970, pp. 93-115.

17. E. Reyneri, 'Maggio Strisciante', pp. 84-92.

18. This account is drawn from L. Dolci and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 3, pp. 23-48.

19. This account is drawn from L. Luppi and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 1, pp. 115-144.

20. Ibid., pp. 31-52.

21. This account is drawn from I. Regalia and M. Regini, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 4, pp. 25-58.

CHAPTER 16: PIRELLI - A CASE OF "PERMANENT CONFLICT"

The period from autumn 1968 to the opening of the 'contract season' a year later has been described as one of 'structural crisis' for the industrial relations system in Italy, and for the relationship between the unions and the mass of workers.(1) The most dramatic instances of this crisis were experienced at the Pirelli rubber factory in Milan, which was torn by disputes from September 1968 to December 1969, and at the Fiat plants in Turin, which were hit by wildcat disputes in April 1969. The emergence of the semi-skilled workers of the large factories of the manufacturing sector as a leading protagonist of industrial action, and the generalisation of conflict to groups of workers previously little involved in disputes, like white collar workers, radically transformed industrial and social conflict in Italy.

This chapter will focus on the conflict at the Pirelli company which became a cause celebre in late 1968, and will be followed by a chapter on white collar and technicians' struggles. However, it is necessary first to put these developments into a general political and economic context.

In the last quarter of 1968 and throughout 1969 output in the economy continued to increase, and new workers were taken on in large numbers. The multiplication of company agreements signalled an accentuation in the 'wage drift'; at Alfa Romeo the number of agreements tripled in 1968.(2) At Sit Siemens the 130 agreements of 1968 rose to 250 in

1969.[3] In the face of this movement, the Confindustria and the government lacked coherent strategies of containment and control. The Confindustria adopted a line of maximum resistance, particularly with regard to incursions on management prerogatives, and called for government support in outlawing wildcat strikes. A traditional suspicion of unions, particularly of the Communist-dominated CGIL, vitiated attempts to encourage them to discipline their memberships. The government, however, refused to enter the lists on the side of the employers. Throughout the industrial disputes of 1968-69 it tried to avoid partisanship. It tended to intervene in cases of deadlock in the private sector at the behest of the local authorities, or acted 'indirectly' through the managements of State-controlled companies. Its pluralist policy was outlined by Donat-Cattin during a debate on the Labour Charter ('Statuto dei Lavoratori'), which the Socialists in the government keenly supported;

> 'Our assessment of conflict must change. It is a physiological not pathological aspect of an economy undergoing continuous and accelerated change. Conflict must neither be repressed nor checked; rather it is a good thing that it is openly expressed. Although one should not deny the importance of preventing conflict, emphasis should be given more to its regulation by the parties concerned, than to coercion by the State as a means of resolving the differences of which the conflict is a manifestation.'[4]

This statement of principle contained a recognition of a de facto freedom of collective bargaining that had been won by workers on the shopfloor, and looked forward to an

institutionalisation of conflict underpinned by the legislative protection of trade unions. Furthermore, the attempts to form governments without Socialist Party support or participation failed, showing the difficulties of the Christian Democrats in obtaining a consensus for more Right wing policies. However, no new reforms were forthcoming from the Centre Left government. Two general strikes were called by all three union confederations on November 14th 1968, and on February 5th 1969, before the government agreed to index-linked pensions. Without the traditional arm of deflation, government economic policies consisted in riding out the storm.

In the eyes of the majority of the population the State remained unpopular. The stalemate of the May 1968 elections meant that there was no immediate prospect of new government policies. Then two police attacks on picket-lines added to the history of bloodshed that stained labour relations in Italy. At Avola, a town in Southern Italy, two farmworkers were killed by police during a demonstration on December 2nd; at Battipaglia near Naples in the following April two more people were killed by police during a dispute over a factory closure. The response in the factories in the North was massive and immediate: workers took strike action and held protest meetings. The killings were interpreted as symptomatic of the State's repressive character and of the inherent violence of exploitation. In their aftermath the union confederations adopted the slogan 'Disarm the police'. Importantly, the PCI entered into full opposition to the government and consistently blamed the

police for all outbreaks of violence during demonstrations and pickets.[5] Although at ministerial level the aim was to de-politicise labour disputes, at a local level prefects and police acted according to well-established precedents, and managements brought charges that by October 1968 involved a total of 10,000 workers and students.

It was in this setting of escalating political and social tension that industrial conflicts focused issues, linking generalised discontents to the particular disaffections of the workplace. The Pirelli rubber company became emblematic in this respect. Years of pent-up hostilities surfaced in a dispute which riveted local and national attention for months. It is the Pirelli case which is the subject of this chapter.

An Outline of Events

On February 13th 1968 the three union confederations and the Pirelli management signed a national contract for the rubber sector. The agreement, like those to follow in 1968-69, did not have the support of the mass of Pirelli workers and gave rise to further disputes on unresolved issues. The factories consequently became the sites of what came to be called 'permanent conflict' ('conflittualità permanente'). The causes of frustration and discontent on the shopfloor were similar in many respects to those that troubled the engineering sector, and the unions were similarly out of touch with shopfloor opinion. However, at the Pirelli works in Milan industrial conflict took new forms which set

an important example to the movement of opposition in the workplaces.

Firstly, some workers at Pirelli organised an independent rank-and-file grouping calling itself a CUB (Comitato Unitario di Base: 'unitary base committee'), which was heralded nationally as a model of 'workers' autonomy'; secondly, their 'output-reduction strikes' ('sciopero di rendimento' and 'autoriduzione'), signalled a 'breakthrough' in the invention of new forms of industrial action. These two phenomena will be looked at separately, but firstly it is necessary to place them in the context of the chronology of events and specific situation of the Pirelli company.

A key source of disaffection at Pirelli was the piece-rate system, 80% of the 8,000 manual workers of the Bicocca factory in Milan did piece-work, and it was responsible for a large proportion of their wage packet. Incentives combined with fines for bad work, was an important element in the Pirelli management strategy for controlling the workforce. Relatively high wages linked to productivity paved the way for the drastic reductions in the workforce in the post war period. The number of employees fell from 21,000 in 1948 to a low point of 8,000 employees in the late 1950's, when the company introduced automated and semi-automated labour processes. During the boom of the 'miracle years' young male semi-skilled workers were taken on to replace older, skilled workers. They were attracted by the wages and were recruited as part of a strategy to undermine what remained of a strong Communist and CGIL presence in the factory at Bicocca. They

bore the brunt of the massive increases in workloads following even bigger orders for tyres, cables and rubber products coming from Fiat and the engineering industry.(6)

In the mid 1960's Pirelli had firmly established itself as an international company in the rubber sector. It was second only to Dunlops in the European market. After a slight fall due to the recession, by mid 1966 production had risen 15% over the previous year. From 1964, increases in workloads, rather than investment in new machinery was the chief means of raising productivity. A worker in the vulcanisation section told a researcher that in 1964 he had had 8 machines to tend, but as a result of rationalisations the number had increased to 17 and he had to produce 390 tyres instead of 165. From 1964 to 1968 production doubled using the same labour and machines.(7) However, because of a change in the payment system, profits rose but not wages. In 1964 Pirelli severed the link between production bonuses and productivity, and reduced piece-rates, by changing from an individual to a collective payment system. The company saved itself 50 lire an hour through the latter alone, and cut real wages by an overall 20%.(8)

The agreement which sanctioned the changes in the payment system in 1964 was originally signed by the CISL and UIL alone, but the CGIL conceded the next year, in order to gain the benefits of the check-off system whereby the company deducted union dues directly from the wage packets.(9) This formal recognition of the unions was an aspect of

Pirelli's much publicised 'enlightened' approach to industrial relations. Yet union membership for 1966-67 did not exceed 30% of the workforce and management refused to allow shopfloor bargaining.(10) For the most part, especially among the younger workers, the gap between the unions and the mass of workers widened rather than narrowed as a result of the contract. Firstly, the unions had de facto agreed to worse conditions and pay. Secondly, they now had less need to keep in touch with the membership through the simple activity of dues-collection. Lastly, they had agreed to a two-and-a-half year truce, which effectively postponed bargaining activity until the next contract was negotiated. The CISL and UIL welcomed the truce because they openly recognised the company's need to plan ahead on the basis of the maximum 'predetermination of variable factors such as the wage'. A lament in a CGIL factory report reveals the general distrust of the union among workers:

> 'what's worse is that they have not learnt that they are the union, and that the union is not a boss to go to only in times of disputes'.

An old militant when asked: 'Do you think that the union can grow?' replied: 'Yes, but only on the eve of the Revolution'.(11)

Although the strikes over the renewal of the contract in early 1968 involved almost all the manual workers and 70% of white collar workers, the contract that was eventually signed did not reflect this militancy. Instead of the requested three hours reduction in the working week, one hour was agreed to, along with a 5% increase on basic wages. The question of

piece-rates was left to 'further talks'. Workers were so angry over the piece-rates that they took industrial action 'spontaneously' without reference to the unions. As was typical in the first phase of mobilisation, it was a group of skilled workers who initiated action; the typography section struck in May for the re-establishment of the piece-rates they had had in 1952. For them, the primary concern was to increase wages. However, other workers who followed suit, began to open up questions about the relation of piece-work to conditions of work as a whole.(12)

The first sections to take industrial action were those with the worst working conditions, like the tyre and vulcanisation sections, which also had a high percentage of newly recruited, young, semi-skilled workers. They were exposed to health hazards such as fumes, skin diseases (eczema and others), exhaustion and nervous disorders resulting from the speeds of the production cycle.(13) Although workers demanded the elimination of poisonous fumes and the slowing-down of work speeds, the issue of the piece-rates was originally tackled in terms of improvements in pay. The action taken, however, implicitly undermined the function of piece-rates in regulating productivity. In the tyre and vulcanisation sections before the August break, and then in 18 sections following the holidays, workers implemented a co-ordinated reduction in output ('autoriduzione'). Without awaiting management permission, they worked at speeds that were less tiring. Whilst the effect on output and profits was considerable, the loss in earnings was relatively little; a 10% reduction of production was costing the workers a mere

150 *lire* a day, the price of two cups of coffee.(14)

'Autoreduction' quickly became the preferred form of action, but it was not practicable by those workers not on piece-work. Industrial action therefore included lightning strikes and general stoppages. A report in *L'Unità* described how workers decided on action:

> 'They are spontaneous strikes, decided on directly by the workers in each section during improvised meetings; these are held all over the place - in the canteen during meal-breaks ... by the slot-machine, while having a smoke, or even on the street outside.'(15)

Such spontaneous sectional stoppages had only happened once before at Pirelli in the previous twenty years. On that occasion, the management successfully defeated the workers by locking them out.(16)

In 1968, however, threats of fines and suspensions, and the attempted lock-out in mid-December, were counter-productive. The Pirelli management waged a propaganda war on the 'guerrilla action' in the factories through the Assolombarda, the employers' association for Lombardy. A statement in October spoke of the intimidation of white collar workers and complained more generally that:

> 'this agitation (a group of workers in the tyre plant suddenly took industrial action thereby stopping work in the plant as a whole) ... is contrary to every trade union practice and is carried out with inadmissable methods.'(17)

Yet, far from discouraging workers, such pronouncements were taken as evidence of the effectiveness of their action and were treated as almost welcome publicity.

The Pirelli management took a hard line because it was a test-case in industrial confrontation. The company had an influential voice in the national and regional employers' associations and had a clear policy of maintaining 'management's right to manage'. As a result, the mobilisations at Pirelli took on symbolic significance for the workers' movement too. The pickets of the company office block, the so-called 'Pirellone', became scenes of mass solidarity involving the whole of the Milanese working class. The marches of the Pirelli workers created a particularly vivid image because of their distinctive white overalls, which contrasted with the '_tute blu_' of the engineering workers. The sheer din coming from the beating of milk cans (a practice started in the struggles of the early '60's), and from the echoing slogans transformed the atmosphere of the city centre. The continuous invasions of streets which had become the preserve of offices and shops, served as a reminder that the wealth was actually produced by some and consumed by others. One account of a march going down the fashionable Via Monte Napoleone, which had shopwindows laden with expensive goods, speaks of a worker waving his empty food-box ('_schiscetta_') and shouting: 'This is how Pirelli treats us'. On December 2nd 1968 the coincidence of the lock-out at Pirelli, the killings of Avola, and the occupation of several schools, created an exceptional mood

of tension and anger in Milan. The convergence of struggles around the question of management and State repression represented a moment of general mobilisation and solidarity. There were twenty minute stoppages to remember the dead in all the factories, thousands of posters covered the walls of the city, which became the 'theatre of impassioned demonstrations, marches and meetings, many of them entirely improvised'. The Pirelli workers demonstrating outside the RAI-TV buildings with a banner calling for the disarming of the police, were joined by hundreds of students on strike.(18)

Under immense political pressure, Pirelli withdrew the lock-out notices, and on December 22nd agreed to raise payments for piece-work and to establish bargaining procedures in the event of disputes. The company recognised union representatives responsible for negotiating piece-rates.(19) Although this marked the first step in allowing the unions a continuous presence on the shopfloor, whereas previously severe limits had been placed on their freedom of movement, the management wanted them to control not represent their membership.

Unfortunately for the Pirelli company the unions could no longer be relied on to channel and control rank-and-file discontent. They showed the same weaknesses resulting from hierarchism and inflexibility as their counterparts at Montedison in Porto Marghera. The CISL and UIL, which had been openly anti-Communist and 'collaborationist', experienced revolts against the old 'Cold War' leaderships;

whilst the CGIL had two-thirds of its branch leadership at Bicocca replaced between October and December, mainly by younger militants. Yet the new leaderships did not have a solid basis on the shopfloor. The desire to keep a centralised hold on decision-making power sprung from fear of shopfloor spontaneity and independent organisation. The CUB, for example, represented a threat when it successfully outflanked the official organisations by promoting 'autoreduction'. In reply, the unions proposed factory branches to link the shopfloor and the company organisation. But by the end of 1969 the CGIL branch only had about 40 active members. The fact that it was a purely organisational proposal coming from above, and that it was based on union loyalty rather than on the common identity of the shopfloor made it a non-starter. The CGIL attacked 'autoreduction' and warned of the dangers of 'sectionalism' ('repartismo') just at the moment that workers were coming together over shopfloor issues, and was forced to adopt this form of action officially.

The agreement of December 1968 therefore provided only a breathing space. Agitation broke out in some sections over grading and health hazards in early 1969. Workers carried out 'autoreduction' to keep down work speeds, and overtime was banned.(20) In March Pirelli produced what was labelled 'the mini-decree' ('decretone') in an attempt to outmanoeuvre the unions. In return for 6 days continuous production a week, the company offered an immediate concession of a 40 hour week with staggered rest days. Women were to work

on a part-time basis. The proposal, however, was turned down.(21) There was opposition to Saturday night working, which had previously been eliminated by workers who had simply refused to work that shift. A firm stand was taken against part-time working. This is of interest as one of the rare occasions on which the problem of women's work was directly addressed.

L'Unità reported a discussion with women workers. The journalist in question was careful to give their age and parental status, although the paper did not do so in the case of male workers. Antonietta, 'aged thirty-six and the mother of a child of six' was reported as saying:

> 'I don't work for pleasure, but because I have to contribute to the household budget, and to make sure that we don't just eat soup. Maybe 'part-time' work is what Pirelli's wife does.'(22)

A CUB pamphlet dealing with the 'decretone' reiterated this position and pointed out:

> 'The bosses present us with the problem turned on its head. Instead of improving women's conditions by providing full-time education, public canteens and nurseries, thereby enabling women to work without being exploited as they are now, they want them to work less and earn less'.(23)

The pamphlet goes on to criticise the part-time working scheme as a half-way house to unemployment, and as a way of increasing exploitation during the four hours that would be worked. In its place, the CUB calls for a reduction in working hours for women without a reduction in pay. Whilst it is interesting to note that the CUB analysis of women's oppression tentatively

acknowledges the double nature of women's work, and the need to lessen their burden, its approach does not differ substantially from that of the trade unions and traditional Left parties. It starts from the premise that women should be responsible for housework rather than men, and says nothing about women's particular problems as waged workers.(24)

Whatever the limitations of the opposition to Pirelli's 'decretone', it nevertheless succeeded in defeating the management manoeuvre. Industrial conflict continued unabated. In May 1969 the unions launched a new campaign in response to further sectional stoppages, and to the harryings of the CUB, which called for large wage increases, the abolition of piece-work, parity between manual and white collar workers, and a reduction in the number of grades. The unions' demands were much less radical. Above all they centred on the issue of union recognition on the shopfloor. However, the Pirelli management maintained its intransigent refusal to extend bargaining rights to the unions over questions of production, which were considered management prerogatives. The dispute continued into the 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 when it became a focal point of Milanese mobilisations. However, before that time the experiences of the CUB at Pirelli and the example of the 'autoreduction' struggles had become part of the patrimony of the workers' movement as a whole.

Autoreduction

Autoreduction ('autoriduzione') - worker-controlled

reduction in output - was a form of industrial action that captured the imagination of wide sections of activists on the shopfloor, in the Left, within the trade unions, and in the social movements more generally. Two contemporary accounts give some indication of the enthusiasm for autoreduction:

> 'The reduction of work speeds ... is a masterpiece of consciousness ('autocoscienza') and technical ability ... it is as if an orchestra had managed to play a difficult symphony harmoniously without the conductor at a rhythm agreed upon and regulated by the players of the single instruments.'(25)

This is Aniello Coppola writing an article in Rinascita entitled 'Pirelli - a victory for workers' inventiveness'. He goes on to say that the feat is even more remarkable given the low educational qualifications and the number of immigrant workers involved. A second account, published a year later in the paper Il Manifesto, recorded how the factory

> 'functioned with the regularity of a clock, but the tick-tock is more spaced out in time; it has a slowness that exasperates the bosses, who protest about the 'irregularities' of this form of struggle. The workers, on their part, acquire consciousness of their power and learn to make the bosses dance to the rhythm of their music.'(26)

Initially workers reduced output since it was an effective way of making the company pay without themselves incurring great losses. They turned an iniquitious piece-rate system to their advantage. Autoreduction began 'spontaneously'

in as far as the action was initiated in individual sections and without predefined plans and organisation. However, as the above accounts underline, autoreduction in an enormous plant like Pirell's at Bicocca required remarkable co-ordination and discipline. The militants of the CUB acted as a catalyst, but the extensive implementation of autoreduction was only possible because of the network of unofficial representatives on each shopfloor. Many of these were drawn from the ranks of the CGIL, and PCI. One of the protagonists recalls:

> 'The comrades of the PCI worked day and night to connect one section in a struggle to the next one ... There was nothing spontaneous about it, except in the fantasies of far off observers.'(27)

Autoreduction began pragmatically as an effective form of action, but it was quickly invested with more general political and ideological meaning. When workers continued to 'autoreduce' production after the formal termination of industrial action, they enacted their demand for more human working conditions. Autoreduction became an end in itself as well as a means to an end. In the words of the student movement it was an example of 'practicing the objective'. The self-organisation involved in autoreduction put in question the hierarchy of command in the factory. At Pirelli the foremen had exercised control by discouraging communication between groups of workers (especially between the older and younger workers), and by calculating piece-rates and recommending workers for promotion. When workers assumed

direct responsibility for production speeds and built an intricate web of contacts between themselves they undermined the foremen's position. Similarly, this direct democracy with its informal delegate structure undercut the vertical and hierarchical structures of the unions. Direct action, moreover, cut out the need for outside organisational mediation, such as that provided by the union.(28)

The political significance of autoreduction also owed something to its opponents, who denounced it as 'illegal and un-trade unionist'. This 'illegality' was seen as a virtue by activists concerned to raise workers' consciousness. An interview with a worker member of the CISL at Pirelli stresses the positive aspects of these struggles against the organisation of work in the factory:

> 'In my opinion sabotage always takes place in companies with a scientific organisation of work, where they are liberatory acts whether it is carried out by individuals or groups. The fact that workers develop harder-hitting forms of action against the bosses is a sign of their anti-legalism, and greater awareness of their situation ... The first serious fight over the speeds of the line was a major event ... Ultimately when the speed of assembly work was changed without the agreement of the workers, they just didn't do part of the work ... and that became routine.'(29)

When autoreduction was first implemented against Pirelli, there was conflict between its advocates, especially between the CUB and the unions. The latter clung to traditional strike action. During the autumn and winter of

1968 the unions changed their position and consented to autoreduction, but disagreements remained about how and to what ends it should be carried out. The CUB saw autoreduction as a disruptive and 'anti-legalitarian' method of struggle which expressed the workers' total opposition to and estrangement from the capitalist system.(30) Meanwhile, radicals within the unions underlined the discipline and organisation which autoreduction demanded of the workers. For Left-wingers inside the PCI and for PSIUP militants in particular, it prefigured workers' control of production in a socialist society. Autoreduction showed that the workers themselves could do the managing. The use of the vivid imagery of orchestras and clocks to describe the Pirelli action contrasts with the CUB's stress on disruption. The workers' cool, calculated rationalism is counterposed to the confusion and petulance of the bosses.(31)

Which of these interpretations came closest to describing the Pirelli workers' consciousness and aspirations is difficult to say. Each, it seems, reflected currents of opinion and attitudes within the workforce, although it should be said that the majority were less politicised than the activists. Participation in general strikes was low and the unions still managed to win majorities for their resolutions during general meetings.(32) The activists were therefore too optimistic in their expectations, but they nonetheless succeeded in making autoreduction symbolic and significant for the workers' movement as a whole. Their example encouraged not only imitation but widespread reflection on creative and

inventive methods of industrial action. In the first months of 1969 organisations of this kind sprang up in most of the cities of Northern Italy, and in July 1969 they were able to hold a conference in Turin, which was attended by hundreds of workers and students. They were drawn together by a shared antagonism to the reformist politics of the unions and Left parties, and by the feeling that the time was ripe to create alternative organisations. There were considerable differences between the groupings about their methods of work and their relationships to the official labour movement, which surfaced during the autumn, but during the first heady months when the CUB at Pirelli was making the news, the spirit of unity prevailed.

The Pirelli CUB

The CUB at Pirelli was the best known and most influential experiment in workers' self-organisation prior to the Hot Autumn. The CUB has been broadly defined as follows:

> 'The CUB's were informal grass-roots groups made up of workers and students. During the crisis of Italy's industrial relations system, when unions and parties were slow to respond to the new spirit of militancy, they took a leadership role in certain factories. They promoted workers' self-activity and gave expression to anti-capitalist feelings.'(33)

The CUB at Pirelli was founded in February 1968, directly after the signing of the unsatisfactory national contract for the rubber sector workers. It began as an attack

on that agreement. The CUB pressed for industrial action over piece-rates, health hazards and grading, and criticised the unions for their spinelessness. The nucleus of the CUB was composed by militants with considerable experience in the CGIL and the Left parties. A report of March 1968 refers to the promoters of the CUB as 'comrades with considerable influence among the workers. In their sections you can feel the unity among workers ... Their meetings, despite the semi-clandestinity, are far more crowded than those held by the unions'.(34)

Prior to the formation of the CUB at Pirelli there had been groupings set up to promote struggles in the workplace outside and in defiance of the unions, as at Sit Siemens in 1966. However, they had been dissolved after the engineering contract struggles because of lack of support. In early 1968 conditions had changed. Firstly, spontaneous agitation in the factories proved durable rather than sporadic. Secondly, a generation of militants, encouraged by the student movement, saw the possibility of constructing independent organisations on the shopfloor. In Milan a current had formed within the CGIL which promoted 'round-table' discussions and an 'open letter' to militants on the need for action over 'workers' conditions' ('condizione operaia'). It claimed that the unions were incapable of representing shopfloor opinion. This tendency, which identified with the reviews La Sinistra and Falce e Martello, organised the first meetings of the CUB at Pirelli.(35)

This CUB was very much a child of an orthodox Left and trade union experience. It was at home in a factory with a long political tradition. It came into existence because the unions overlooked the pressing preoccupations of the mass of workers, whose health as well as wage packets had suffered from the intensification of work. However, the CUB originally saw its function as a pressure group on the union, and rejected ideas of forming an alternative union or of leaving the unions.(36)

The CUB's guiding principle was to 'start directly from the workers' conditions in the factory'.(37) In retrospect, this approach seems rather banal, but it was radical at the time, and reflected the influence of the Quaderni Rossi. Since the unions at Pirelli failed to consult the shopfloor and were more concerned with their ideological differences, basic grievances were left to fester. The CUB's first actions were simply designed to reactivate trade unionism. Its demands of June 1968 for the restoration of production bonuses tied to productivity and for increases in piece-rates, showed a respect for the traditional payment system. However, the CUB rapidly assumed more radical positions which challenged management despotism. It called for the total abolition of health hazards, including piece-work, the elimination of the lowest grades and equal wage increases for all workers. Whilst the unions accepted the existing framework governing workers' conditions in the factory and asked for compensation where health was endangered, the CUB started from the premise that

workers' needs should determine how the production process was organised.(38)

At no time during 1968-9 did the CUB counter-proposals win majorities and defeat the unions' motions at general meetings. When it came to formal decision-making the workers were diffident about the radical alternatives, but over the two years it was these which dominated agendas. Moreover, workers willingly rebelled against agreements drawn up in their name by the unions, and resorted to forms of industrial action promoted by the CUB, although not always.(39) When in May 1968 it called for workers to follow the example of the Renault occupation in France, the message fell on deaf ears. It was more the product of fantasy, perhaps encouraged by the student participants in the CUB meetings, than a tactic related to the experience at Pirelli.(40) When the CUB propagandised autoreduction, however, they had greater success. In particular their refusal to timetable stoppages or reductions in output made spontaneity the most democratic and incisive method of destroying the discipline imposed by management. The fame of the Pirelli CUB resulted from its remarkable success in making a science of wildcat actions and in promoting them, rather than in its theoretical or political formulations. The unions were forced to follow the CUB's lead to keep control of the situation in the factory. The Corriere della Sera reported in September 1969:

> 'it seems that the unions have despite everything mounted the tiger - represented by a mere 200 wild activists out of a total of 12,000 workers - and that now they're trying desperately to check its stride.'(41)

The fact that such a small minority could have such influence was a sign of the new-found combativity of workers, but also of its ability to interpret and give expression to the imagination of the shopfloor.

The project of the CUB at Pirelli was to construct a new form of political organisation and practice. Although it occupied a vacuum left by the unions, its ambitions went beyond the horizons of unionism. According to the CUB the unions acted 'within the logic of the capitalist system by manipulating worker militancy and compressing it between the beginning and end of negotiations'.(42) In key respects the CUB was conceived as an alternative approach to political activity, which adopted some of the analyses popularised by the student movement. The CUB contained not only workers at Pirelli, but 'outsiders' including student activists, several of whom came from the Catholic University. In the collection of documents published by the CUB in early 1969, the opening paragraph deals with worker-student unity:

> 'The CUB has brought about a new kind of connection ... from the purely instrumental one developed in the Milanese workers' struggles according to which the students had a service function as the distributors of leaflets and members of the picket line. In the CUB students no longer have a subordinate role but participate in the first person in the workers' political activity.'(43)

Such continuous participation, it was stated, entailed a rejection of 'workerism' (according to which industrial

workers were the only revolutionary subjects). It surmounted the separation of the activities of the student and workers' movements, which was encouraged by the Communist Party and CGIL. By combining the students' time (for research etc.) and mobility, and the workers' knowledge of the concrete situation, the CUB offered new possibilities for breaking down the artificial divisions between the social groups.

Another and more fundamental division that the CUB consciously set out to overcome was that between economic and political struggles. A CUB pamphlet stated:

> 'The economic struggle is fruitful only if it is against the general political plan of the bosses in the factory and in society. The political moment cannot be separated from the economic struggles. It is workers' consciousness of their own interests and rights in the workplace that leads to general struggle in society, and vice versa.'(44)

The CUB was seen to be a means of combining the political and economic struggles by focusing attention on the question of power within the factory. The conflict itself was thought to generate greater consciousness of the need to confront the system of exploitation as a whole. The stress put on violent and disruptive forms of industrial action stemmed from this conception of learning through conflict.

However, the political ambition of the majority of the CUB activists, to found a unitary communist practice in the everyday struggles of the shopfloor, was undermined by the appearance of ideological divisions, which it had originally

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 16

1. E. Reyneri, 'Maggio Strisciante', pp. 93-107.

2. A. Sandretti, Lotte all'Alfa Romeo, p. 30.

3. I. Regalia and M. Regini, Lotte operaie Vol. 4, p. 68.

4. Quoted by Tiziano Treu, 'Lo sciopero nello statuto dei diritti dei lavoratori' in A. Alessandrini (Ed.), Conflittualità e aspetti normativi di lavoro, p. 81.

5. For example, L'Unità (4-12-68), the official paper of the PCI, reported that a demonstration by some 10,000 people in Milan over the Avola killings had been attacked by police

> 'with extremely violent charges, truncheon-attacks, tear-gas ... the police began a real rounding-up operation, arresting anyone whom they regarded as 'suspicious' ... they were greeted by the shout: 'Assassins! Assassins!' and by mock fascist salutes.'

6. Valentino Parlato, 'Rapporto sulla Pirelli', in Il Manifesto, October-November; P. Bolchini, La Pirelli, p. 43; pp. 97-100.

7. P. Bolchini, La Pirelli, pp. 1-29.

8. Gruppo di compagni del consiglio di fabbrica della Pirelli Bicocca, Le Lotte alla Pirelli: 1968-72 (Milan, 1972), p. 8.

9. Vito Basilico, 'Pirelli: un decennio di lotte viste da un protagonista' in Classe, 12, 1976, pp. 278-279.

10. P. Bolchini, La Pirelli, p. 184.

11. Ibid., p. 188.

12. G. Bianchi et al, Grande impresa e conflitto industriale (Rome, 1970), pp. 79-82.

13. P. Bolchini, La Pirelli, p. 48; G. Bianchi, Grande impresa, p. 74.

14. G. Bianchi et al, Grande impresa, pp. 82-5.

15. L'Unità (20-9-68).

16. M. Sclavi, Lotta di classe e organizzazione operaia (Milan, 1974), p. 38.

17. Corriere della Sera (11-10-68).

18. L'Unità (4-12-68).

19. M. Sclavi, Lotta di classe, pp. 56-7.

20. G. Bianchi, Grande impresa, pp. 86-7.

21. V. Basilico, 'Pirelli', pp. 84-285.

22. L'Unità (5-4-69).

23. CUB-Pirelli-Lotta Continua (leaflet dated 4-6-69).

24. Piero Bolchini, whose 1967 book on the Pirelli company identified many of the grievances which subsequently enflamed industrial relations, both recognises the suffering of women workers, and sees it from the point of view of a male Leftist. He records an interview and comments on it;

> ''The woman worker, if she is young, aims above all to get married ... or she looks forward only to getting old quickly and having a pension.' It is a desperate situation that proposes escape through petit-bourgeois models of living ... only in very rare cases do women workers participate in the trade union, political and cultural life of the factory.' - La Pirelli, pp. 49-50.

25. Aniello Coppola, 'Pirelli: una vittoria dell'inventività operaia', in Rinascita (20-12-68).

26. Valentino Parlato, 'Rapporto sulla Pirelli'.

27. V. Basilico, 'Pirelli', p. 282.

28. M. Regini and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e l'organizzazione del lavoro (Padua, 1971), pp. 31-5.

29. Ibid., p. 170.

30. CUB Pirelli, Linea di massa - documenti della lotta di classe, June-December 1968, p. 3.

31. See a comprehensive formulation of this approach in the work of the general secretary of the engineering workers section of the CGIL during the period - Bruno Trentin, Da sfruttati a produttori (Bari, 1977).

32. M. Sclavi, Lotta di classe, pp. 53-4; p. 74.

33. G. Bianchi, I CUB (Rome, 1971), p. 11.

34. La Sinistra (30-3-68).

35. La Sinistra, 8-9 September, 1967.

36. G. Bianchi, I CUB, p. 42.

37. CUB Pirelli, Linea di Massa, p. 3.

38. Ibid., pp. 4-5; p. 20.

39. G. Bianchi, I CUB, pp. 46-50.

40. V. Basilico, 'Pirelli', p. 281.

41. Corriere della Sera (5-10-69).

42. CUB Pirelli, Linea di Massa, p. 3.

43. Ibid., p. 2.

44. Ibid., p. 2.

45. Gruppo di compagni del consiglio di fabbrica, Le lotte alla Pirelli, p. 22.

CHAPTER 17: TECHNICIANS AND CLERICAL WORKERS AWAKE

On April 8th 1969 L'Unità reported the views of a Philips white collar worker, one of a thousand who had come out on strike in support of a colleague sacked for attempting to form an Internal Commission:

> 'If they had sacked me before, I wouldn't have known what to do. The following day I would have looked for another job. After the first strikes and the mass meetings I have begun to understand that we have rights and that they can be defended.'(1)

This sense of collective identity was slow to form among the office workers in Italy, but between the winter of 1968 and the spring of 1969 it took dramatic and tangible forms among those employed by the big industrial companies. The participation of white collar workers in strikes and demonstrations alongside the manual workers was itself a new phenomenon. Their autonomous mobilisation and development of innovative forms of action and objectives seemed to signal the formation of a new collective identity.

In Italy discussion among Marxists, and in particular among sociologists of industrial relations, had focused on the semi-skilled worker ('operaio comune'). The emergence of the white collar worker as social protagonist provoked a new debate.(2) Leaflets, articles and conference reports on the question proliferated. Their positions can be divided into two groups; firstly, there are those that saw the new white collar workers (in particular the technicians) as the future makers of a socialist society, in the place of the industrial proletariat; secondly there are those who

identified a progressive 'proletarianisation' and radicalisation of the white collar strata. The adequacy of these analyses is best judged by looking at the behaviour of the white collar workers in the field of industrial relations.

Before and After '68

Before the mass mobilisations of 1968 the 'impiegati' enjoyed privileges and a style of life which set them apart from manual workers, and which were sanctioned by the social superiority historically attributed to mental labour.(3) Management paternalism flourished in the offices long after it had been challenged in the factory. In return for the privileges of the monthly salary, sick pay and relative job security, white collar workers tended to conform to management expectations. Traditionally the 'impiegato' turned up for work in times of strikes, and earned the other workers' hatred for the 'crumiro' ('scab'). Sometimes this would erupt in violence; a worker at Sit Siemens recalls how in 1967 hundreds of women workers, whistles in their mouths, invaded the offices and literally wheeled out office workers on their chairs.(4) The white collar workers did not think of themselves as members of the working class, nor were they regarded as such by the unions. The CISL encouraged their sense of 'corporate' identity, whilst the CGIL spoke of them as middle class sectors with whom alliances had to be made. Both bargained and made separate agreements on behalf of their white collar members.

In the 1960's there was a considerable change in the situation of the 'impiegati'. In the engineering sector in the province of Milan they numbered 28,000 in 1968, and constituted over a quarter of those employed in industry as a whole.(5) The growth was particularly among the lowest grades of clerical workers, and among technicians, especially those employed in the electronics industry. This change in the employment structure reflected the development of the tertiary sector, and the concentration of management offices in the city and province of Milan. The 'Pirellone', the confident 1960's office-block of the Pirelli company, and the 'centro direzionale' (Management centre) near the Central Station, symbolised the changes in progress.

The growth in the number of the white collar workers is significant in explaining their involvement in the industrial conflict. It is important to bear in mind that the increase in the demand for such employees by private companies and the State was less than the supply. The expansion of the education system and the new aspiration to avoid manual work resulted in the excess supply. This was one of the factors underlying the weakened position of the white collar worker on the labour market and hence the decline of their relative bargaining power. A survey of the largest firms for the period 1962-70 showed that, whilst skilled blue collar workers' wages increased by 108.8%, those of low grade white collar workers' increased by 86.9%. Although the technical institutes had more than

made up for the shortage of technicians by the late 1960's, nonetheless a certain stickiness in the market helps explain the relative buoyancy of their wages, by comparison with those of clerical workers.(6)

In general terms, the expansion of the ranks of white collar workers, especially in the low grades, and the erosion of their privileged economic position undermined some of the bases of the paternalist system of control. These changes created the conditions for a movement among these workers, but the positions of clerical and technical workers remained very different. Clerical workers and technicians had an unequal 'pull' on the labour market, and a different relation to the manual workers and to management; technicians had more contact with the shopfloor and more independence from management. Yet both groups of workers lacked a tradition of unionism and a sub-culture of the workplace, like that of manual workers. In the late '60's they looked to manual workers and students for a lead.

White Collar Workers 'Prove Themselves'

If white collar workers were influenced by mass movements, it was not simply a question of imitation. The borrowing was selective, and certain features of their actions were specific to them as a grouping. They first took strike action because of their exclusion from the benefits accruing to workers from the company agreements won in the factory disputes of spring 1968.(7) At Fiat and Pirelli white collar workers joined strikes. They reacted angrily to an

erosion of differentials that in the past had been automatically restored. The first case of an independent strike was in June 1968 at the Falk steel works in the province of Milan. Clerical workers demanded shorter hours, longer holidays, and incentive payments in line with concessions made to the rest of the workers. There was almost total participation and pickets sometimes included 200 strikers. The substantial wage concession won by the strikers in July set an example to other white collar workers in the engineering industry.(8)

The exclusion of white collar workers from agreements made with manual workers had important implications. Firstly, it signalled a shift in management strategies. The refusal to pass on concessions to white collar workers, meant managements were prepared to buy a truce at their expense and to strain traditional loyalties to breaking point. Management surprise in the face of the office rebellion suggests that they were counting on the passivity of these employees, but the resistance to their demands showed a readiness to suspend a long-standing alliance against the rest of the workforce. Secondly, the isolation of the white collar workers, on which management built its 'divide and rule' tactics, sprung from their ambiguous and often estranged relations with the blue collar workers. The situation at the Borletti factory in the winter of 1968, when the majority of the shopfloor refused to support the white collar strike was typical; the standard answer to the requests for solidarity was: 'If they've never gone on strike for us why should we do so for them.'(9)

For the white collar workers, therefore, there was an urgent need to redefine relations with management, with 'fellow workers', and with the unions.

The breakdown of paternalism was often lived out dramatically, since everyday shows of deference were called in question and managers knew the language of repression and arrogance better than that of conciliation and bargaining. At Borletti an article in the factory paper of the FIM-CISL maintained that differences between white and blue collar workers had become insignificant. It denounced the repression of the foremen, but also the haughtiness of management in general. It cited an incident in a lift when a manager waiting for a lift forced a woman secretary, who had said 'full', to get out and walk.(10) At Sit Siemens, a delegation of white collar workers was brushed aside by a manager:

> 'Dr. Leone, when he rejected our demands in toto had the manner of one saying: 'Go ahead anyway, go ahead. I know my hens; after a day or two nobody will remember this fight of yours'.'(11)

Such incidents generated antagonism, especially among younger workers. They were angered by the arbitrary disregard shown by management. The call for the publication of 'merit awards' was significant in this respect.

In the 1960's there had been a considerable extension of the use of 'merit awards', which were granted secretly at management's discretion to 'meritworthy' employees. Its function was to encourage cooperation with superiors and

promote competitive and individualist behaviour. By subjecting the payment to public scrutiny workers thought that the allocation of the awards could be made accountable to themselves.(12) However, the call was not for its abolition, but for the application of 'objective criteria' via consultation. In the early stages of mobilisation, the enemy was seen to be an old-fashioned and arbitrary despotism rather than the very process whereby people were assessed, labelled and allocated a position in a hierarchy.(13)

One of the common features of the movements of 1968-9 was their opposition to authority-figures. The 'reactionary headmaster', the 'overbearing foreman', the 'truncheon-wielding policeman' - these were the targets to be knocked down. In the offices, too, resentments and grievances were focused by acts of petty tyranny which would not have been socially acceptable outside the workplace. Clerical workers were no doubt influenced by the refusal of students and others to put up with authoritarianism. They also proposed more rational models of organisation. The movement sought to set up open and democratic decision-making processes with maximum participation. White collar workers' search for democratic forms of self-organisation in the workplace showed specific qualities. The examples of SNAM Progetti and Sit Siemens were the most notable in Milan.

SNAM Progetti, a unit of ENI, a company which specialised in drilling design and design for the construction of oil refineries and chemical plants, was occupied in October 1968 by its 1,200 workers, most of whom were technicians. The

occupation became a '*cause celebre*' because of its political objectives and its self-organisation. The Commission for Political Relations, set up during the occupation, demanded the establishment of representative organs in the company with decision-making powers over political and economic questions. The general meeting ('*assemblea*') was made into the basic unit of workplace democracy, by-passing the union. The SNAM workers demanded the right to study and training in order to reverse the process of de-skilling, which especially affected women who were usually in the lowest grade. They aimed to 'reconstruct workers' dignity and independence'. The SNAM experiment excited the interest of the radical wing of the CISL which was particularly sensitive to the themes of 'dehumanisation and alienation' at work. Moreover, contacts with the students of the Technical and Science Faculty of the State University were regular.(14)

The struggle of the '*impiegati*' at Sit Siemens in Milan has been described as the most significant in the company in 1968.(15) The boom in the telecommunications sector had involved a growth of Research and Development and of administration; from 1960 to 1968 the number of technicians increased from 1,500 to 2,500, thereby making up 30% of the workforce. The demands they made in November were similar to those at SNAM Progetti; they called for a 'human and anti-authoritarian way of working that enables the valorisation of professional capacities'. However, the situation was very different at Sit Siemens in that the relationship between

the white and blue collar workers was crucial to the balance of forces in the company. Despite 80-90 hours of strikes, levels of participation reaching 90%, and a readiness to strike in the interests of other workers, the white collar workers were defeated in March 1969 because of manual workers' refusal to support them. The latter accepted a separate deal offered by the management. The unions failed to elaborate a set of demands that unified the different sections of workers, but the major obstacle to unity was the manual workers' historic suspicion of people who had traditionally 'scabbed' on them. However, the white collar workers' struggles at Sit Siemens were important for the way they developed democratic structures independently of the unions.

In the Special Systems Laboratory, workers used their work situation to increase their decision-making role. The technicians of the research team secretly continued with a project leading to a major technological breakthrough, despite management orders to stop the work. Ida Regalia writes:

> 'This experience made the workers independent in the face of management, because their awareness of their own professionalism made traditional deference untenable.'(16)

However, these technicians did not cultivate professional élitism. They organised themselves on the basis of open meetings and linked their work to general questions about

how science was used in a capitalist society. Contacts were made with the student movement to discuss these issues.

The idea of democracy that was championed by the most radicalised white collar workers owed a great deal to the student movement. Above all, they stressed the importance of active participation and the creation of grass-roots organisation. The general open meeting was the key structure of discussion and decision-making at both SNAM Progetti and Sit Siemens.(17) The 'commissions' on specific problems (e.g. women's conditions) and 'study groups' set up by the white collar workers, were inspired by student models. At Sit Siemens the use of a questionnaire to find out about the wants and grievances of fellow workers not only prepared the ground for the formulation of demands, but stimulated awareness of problems. For example, the Women Workers Study Group at Sit Siemens produced a document which discussed grading, the quality of work, wages, and the particular exploitation of women at work. It also pointed out:

> 'At the end of 8 hours in the factory, women work at home (washing, ironing, sewing for the husband and children). They are therefore further exploited in the role of housewife and mother, without that being recognised as real work.'(18)

Some white collar workers cooperated closely with the student movement. For example, the founders of the Sit Siemens Study Group, set up in March 1968, were members of the FIM, which had connections with Catholic student

organisations, whose members participated in their discussions. Cultural and social affinity made for easy exchanges between the office/laboratory and university, while ex-students became Sit Siemens employees.(19) The meeting of 2,000 striking white collar workers in the occupied premises of the liceo Vittorio Veneto in February 1969, was one of frequent symbolic celebrations of unity.(20)

White collar workers also looked to the student movement for guidance because of their difficult and critical relationship to the trade unions. This was partly due to a residual middle class diffidence towards the working class, and white collar workers' aspiration to be respectable. One activist recalls how the white collar strikers of Sit Siemens were fundamentally law-abiding in their attitudes. When they distributed leaflets in the Underground stations during a dispute they were careful to say 'We are 'impiegati' at the Siemens and we have paid for our tickets. We are fighting for ...'.(21) Diffidence towards the unions was felt both by those holding on to their 'staff' identities, and those disillusioned by the refusal of the shopfloor workers to help them out. The 'alternative' bodies held more attractions than the unions, for the unpolitical as well as for radicals. Furthermore, the leading militants attacked the unions for being bureaucratic and undemocratic. However, study groups and open meetings renewed and radicalised the unions from below; they did not substitute for them.

For a brief period the informal rank-and-file groupings had a lively influence over a wide spectrum of white collar workers. However, with the decline of the student movement, the example set by the struggles of the semi-skilled workers of the large factories became dominant. Furthermore, the unions began to respond positively to the various 'practical' and 'theoretical' criticisms of their work.

The '_impiegati_' who refused to join strikes were often the targets of the so-called '_spazzate_' ('sweepings'), when groups of workers invaded the offices and drove out the 'staff'. These multiplied in number in mid 1969 and during the Hot Autumn.(22) The attacks were usually 'educative' only in a punitive sense. For the angry young worker it was often: 'a moment of total rebellion, an act of liberation that needed visible and tangible effects - door knocked down, marches, shouting, clashes with the police ...'.(23) For the office workers they were terrifying baptisms of fire.(24) However, during the struggles of 1968-9 this form of action was even adopted by some white collar workers. The mass picket, demonstrations in railway stations, 'articulated strikes' - all these actions typically undertaken by the blue collar workers were learnt by their more respectable colleagues.

The intensity of the industrial conflict reached its height in the spring of 1969 when the '_impiegati_' of the State sector engineering companies were all in dispute. At

Borletti's the 'impiegati' 'proved themselves' in the eyes of the other workers, who came out on strike in protest when one of them was arrested. Sectors of white collar workers looked to the shopfloor for leadership. For many of them manual labour acquired positive connotations, and was identified with the Socialist iconography of working class heroism. The white collar workers' adoption of egalitarian wage demands, such as the lump sum increases, was another sign of their new attitudes.

The development of trust and cooperation between blue and white collar workers was a process fraught with difficulties and by no means irreversible. However, in 1969 there were remarkable steps forward in this direction. The white collar workers' failure to extract major concessions from management by themselves, underlined their need for joint action with other workers. The unions, by the autumn of 1969, drew up demands for a new contract that involved all workers.(25) Union officials and representatives were often more sympathetic towards the white collar workers than their blue collar members. The FIM-CISL was especially open to new forms of organisation at the grass-roots.(26) The formation of delegate structures, the assertion of unions' independence from the political parties, and the unions' consultation of members' opinions - all these developments made the unions more attractive to white collar workers. Some of them even took a leading role in the unions and won the support of manual workers. At Borletti's workers looked to a white collar activist, who was very good in terms of dialectics, for leadership;(27) at Sit Siemens militant young workers were

drawn by the radical ideas promoted by the Study Group which later became the 'manual and white collar workers' group' ('Gruppo Operai-Impiegati').(28)

The militancy of the white collar workers in industry in 1968 was an important moment of recomposition for the Italian working class. Their struggles, along with that of the semi-skilled workers of the large factories, marked a turning point in industrial relations. The older paternalist system was put in crisis. Clerical workers and technicians expressed some demands of an almost utopian kind when they called for the restoration of skilled and participatory work. Yet these struggles remained relatively marginal in Italy - more so than in France where they were central to the movement for self-management ('autogestion').(29)

The SNAM Progetti and the Special Systems Laboratory of Sit Siemens in Milan experienced conflicts which raised some of the issues which Serge Mallet identified with the struggles of the 'new working class'. In both instances there were rebellions against the logic of profitability in the name of a higher scientific rationality. The self-organisation of work and the democratisation of decision-making prefigured an ideal form of society based on control of the work-situation. However, struggles were exceptional and limited to the companies in question. Mallet's prediction that the technicians, because of their key role in the most advanced sectors of the economy, would make the demands for workers' control a bridgehead in the struggle for socialism was not verified by the events

of '68-9. The majority of the demands of the white collar workers did not substantially diverge from those of the semi-skilled manual workers,[30] who also demanded control over the labour process.

Mallet has been criticised for giving exclusive attention to the work situation of technicians and for his deterministic conception of how revolutionary consciousness developed out of their workplace struggles. Pizzorno has shown that the demand for control is not peculiar to this group of workers, and Low-Beer has shown the relevance of factors such as parental background, career-orientation and images of society in explaining the behaviour of white collar workers. Low-Beer's insistence of the importance of looking beyond the workplace is a salutary corrective to the predominance of '<u>operaist</u>' ideas in Italian studies. His conclusions do not diverge from the 'proletarianisation thesis' according to which de-skilling has tended to assimilate most technicians' jobs to those of other workers. However, he also points to workers' disinterest in their jobs, and their concern over the problems of decision-making in society, which they tend to visualise in terms of power rather than status or money. This shift in focus to the 'relationship to the means of decision and control' and away from the 'relationship to the means of production', as Touraine insists, is the key to understanding the struggles which took up the themes first popularised by the student movement.[31]

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 17

1. L'Unità (8-4-68).

2. John Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, pp. 1-23.

3. Aldo Marchetti, 'Impiegati', pp. 172-178.

4. Silvana Barbieri interview.

5. G. Barile, 'Classe operaia e mobilità sociale: Lombardia e area milanese', in Classe, 12 June 1876, p. 114; Quaderni di Sindacato Moderno, 4, 1969, p. 308.

6. J. Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, p. 14.

7. E. Reyneri, 'Maggio strisciante', p. 89.

8. G. Carabelli, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 5, p. 137.

9. Rina Barbieri interview.

10. Dialogo Sindacale (SAS FIM-CISL, Borletti), December 1968.

11. M. Cavallini, Il terrorismo in fabbrica: interviste (Rome, 1978), p. 101.

12. Quaderni di Sindacato Moderno, 4, p. 259. For a penetrating analysis of how a manager's arbitrary and personal judgement is so effective in undermining subordinates' confidence in themselves, see Richard Sennett's work. He writes: 'The use of badges of ability or of sacrifices is to divert men from challenging the limits of their freedom by convincing them that they must first become legitimate, must achieve dignity on a class society's terms, in order to have the right to challenge the terms themselves ... Power in the organisation ... knows about you, what you do not know yourself. The hierarchy's inability to make good on rewards is converted in this way back to a question of who is worth rewarding: the legitimacy of power ...survives only as the powerful can be so very personal'; The Hidden Injuries of Class (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 153-156.

13. Aldo Marchetti, 'Impiegati', pp. 184-185.

14. Quaderni di Sindacato Moderno, 4, pp. 16-43.

15. Ida Regalia, Lotte operaie, Vol. 4, pp. 58-66.

16. Ibid., p. 59.

17. For the function of the 'general meeting' in the first stages of the workers' movement, see I. Regalia, 'Le assemblee', in Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale, September-December 1975, p. 104.

18. Gruppo di operaie della Sit Siemens, 'La donna nella fabbrica' (leaflet dated April 1969).

19. I. Regalia, Lotte operaie, Vol. 4, p. 59.

20. L'Unità (25-2-69).

21. M. Cavallini, Il terrorismo in fabbrica, p. 103.

22. Aldo Marchetti, 'Impiegati', p. 185.

23. An interview with a worker at the Magneti Marelli heavy electrical engineering works in Milan; M. Cavallini, Terrorismo in fabbrica, p. 170.

24. Manual workers' violence towards office workers sometimes had strong sexual connotations. In some sense, all 'pen-pushing' jobs were regarded as not 'real work', not 'manly'. Women clerical workers were the target of overt sexual aggression and abuse. A Fiat worker recalls that during a picket the 'scabs' were humiliated:

> 'We formed a cordon and the office workers started to come out. I remember that one was wearing a black jacket and that it was whitened by spit. They were made to walk along the human corridor and many were kicked in the backside. Terrible things happened ... workers put their hands under skirts and ripped off knickers ... one woman pissed out of fear'.

Extract from Domenico Norcia, 'Io garantito', in L'Espresso, December 1981.

> 'The commonest thing is to see the office workers running terrified between lines of workers under a rain of insults and spit. The relationship has been almost exclusively determined by worker violence.', Lotta Continua (6-12-69).

Managers began to make their offices into fortresses; L'Unità reported that during a dispute at Sit Siemens in July 1969: 'The managers were careful to leave their armour-plated rooms (the heavy steel doors, it seems, are bullet-proof).', L'Unità (23-7-69).

25. A. Marchetti, 'Impiegati', pp. 184-185.

26. Ibid., pp. 190-192; see also FIM-CISL, Incontro Impiegati, Clausone, April 25th-26th 1969;
Documento della FIOM di Milano in preparazione della conferenza nazionale tecnici e impiegati, in Quaderni di Sindacato Moderno, 4, pp. 308-314.

27. Rina Barbieri interview.

28. Ida Regalia, Lotte operaie, Vol. 4, p. 65.

29. J. Low-Beer, Protest and Participation, pp. 222-223.

30. Ibid., pp. 38-42.

31. Ibid., pp. 229-240.

CHAPTER 18: THE HOT AUTUMN: FROM CORSO TRAINO TO PIAZZA FONTANA

Great Expectations

By the autumn of 1969 a social movement composed largely of industrial workers, but also embracing other sections of the population, was already in an advanced stage of development. The movement was not new in that industrial militancy had a history going back over a hundred years in Italy, but it involved workers who were new to industrial organisation and action. The mood in the workplaces expressed the feeling that changes were in the air. It accorded with the process of 'transvaluation' described by Piven and Cloward, in which social disorganisation and the traumas of everyday life are perceived as 'both wrong and subject to redress'.(1)

The role of the minority of experienced militants within the factories, and of agitators at the gates, has already been discussed in the case of the Pirelli and other struggles. Their success in promoting mobilisation and the awakening traditionally passive sectors like white collar workers seemed to prove that something could be done about redressing the wrongs in society. This galvanised activists into feverish propagandising and organising. Sections of workers, especially the semi-skilled ('operaio comune') of the engineering factories, started to move as a group and to organise themselves. Through the struggles of the

Hot Autumn similar experiences to those of Antonio Antonuzzo were lived out by hundreds of thousands of people.(2) Individual awareness of and revolt against injustices fused into a collective movement.

Although the surge of rebellion grew out of the discontents and frustrations of everyday lives, these were not new. It required exceptional times to make them explicit and to give them a shape. The renewal of the engineering workers' contract in the autumn constituted such an occasion. It involved over a million workers, many of whom had already shown their readiness to strike. In addition, the contracts of petrochemical and building workers were due for renewal, and the rubber sector was still in dispute. The anticipation of a great trial of strength between employers and workers focused national attention. Expectations ran high and gained legitimacy from authoritative definitions of the situation. The Minister of Labour, Donat Cattin, declared himself for change and against the inequalities symbolised by tax evasion:

> 'At the end of this autumn we shall all be different ... It is not a healthy system that waves the Italian flag for the workers and the Swiss flag for the industrialists.'(3)

The press likewise predicted momentous events and coined the term 'Hot Autumn' which rapidly entered into popular currency. Its usage is of interest in illuminating the way the strike movement was defined from its onset.

24 Ore, the paper closely associated with Milanese industrialists, was the first to speak of the 'Hot Autumn' ('autunno caldo') in its issue of August 21st 1969. The inspiration for the idea probably came from the references made in the United States to the time of the race riots as 'the long hot summer'. It was meant to foretell a season of industrial conflict. The connotations for the readership were certainly meant to be negative. In another context, the notion of a 'hot autumn' could have had pleasant associations, but in this instance there was the suggestion of something 'un-natural', and the notion of hotness implied irrationality. Without undue forcing, this particular metaphor can be seen as part of a genre in which industrial action, demonstrations and riots were described as 'volcanic explosions', 'sicknesses' and 'abnormalities'. During the events of the autumn these metaphors proliferated in the conservative press. However, what is particularly interesting in this context is not these definitions themselves (which are part of the recurrent imagery with which ruling groups define 'insubordination'),(4) but the way in which they were taken over and subverted by the social movement.

Voloshinov writes:

> 'each living ideological sign has two faces like Janus. Any current curse can become a word of praise, any current truth must sound to many other people as the greatest of lies.'(5)

The 'Hot Autumn' exemplifies this point. No sooner had

it been pronounced than it was taken up by the movement to describe itself. L'Unità wrote:

> 'The autumn of the great contract struggles, the autumn that promises to be hot as one of the bosses' papers wrote today ... has already begun in Milan.'(6)

During the industrial struggles the outbursts of the Corriere della Sera against 'illegal' forms of struggles, and laments on the state of the world were quoted with satisfaction by leaflets and papers circulating in the movement. The catastrophism and fears for the survival of civilisation served, ironically, to heighten expectations of change.

Turin Events - Southerners Revolt

The workers' movement of 1968-9 was predominantly Northern Italian; it had its centre of gravity in the cities of the industrial triangle. That is not to say that what happened in Porto Marghera or Valdagno were not of great importance in the history of the movement, but they remained isolated. For instance, Venice, the city nearest to Porto Marghera, was a centre of artisanal industry and tourism, with a population which, if anything, resented the very existence of the petrochemical plants. Even in the capital, Rome, the movement was relatively marginal to the life of the city, and had nothing like the impact of the student demonstrations and occupations of the previous year.(7) Further south the movement was weaker still.

In the South there were major struggles as at the steelworks at Bagnoli, an area of Naples, but they were isolated because of the absence of industry or its dispersal into small units, and because of the weakness of the unions and Left wing parties. The structure of social conflict was differently ordered.(8) 'Pre-industrial' forms still had their pertinence. For example, in 1967 at Cutro in Calabria the peasants occupied the land and seized and burnt down the municipal buildings during their fight with the police.(9) In July 1970 the town of Reggio Calabria experienced a major insurrection lasting several days, to protest against the transfer of the status of provincial capital.(10) When industrial organisation and action did take place, it often faced the possibility of bloody repression rather than conciliation, as happened at Avola and Battipaglia.

The lack of industry in the South meant lack of jobs, and the necessity to leave home for the cities of the North - whether in Italy, Germany, or Switzerland. Another option was to enrol in the police or '<u>carabinieri</u>' in those cities (63% of the '<u>guardie della PS</u>', '<u>Pubblica Sicurezza</u>', were Southerners).(11) One of the consequences of this labour migration was to transfer the traditions of resistance of the Southern proletariat to those cities, and by a cruel irony, to bring the migrant worker and the migrant policemen face to face in conflict.

Turin was a major pole of migration in the late '60's because of the expansion of the Fiat car works. In 1967 alone,

with the opening of the Rivalta plant, no less than 60,000 arrived in Turin. It was responsible for employing 56,000 in 1968, but the various components firms and the whole local economy depended on Fiat. The daily national paper La Stampa, printed in Turin, was controlled by the company. Then Fiat played a major role within the national economy through the control of 72% of the car market, and in its capacity as a major exporter.(12) The migrant worker fitted into this scheme of things as pure 'labour power'; 'he was squeezed like a lemon in the factory and marginalised in the city'.(13) An autobiographical account of the medical tests before becoming a Fiat worker testifies to the humiliation of being herded en masse into a room with bloodied cotton strewn on the floor;

> 'it was not a question of choosing you, but a way of inculcating an idea of organisation, subordination and discipline.'(14)

It was but one of the aspects of the Fordist regime;

> 'On the production line it was not a question of learning anything, but of habituating the muscles. That is, habituating them under pressure to those movements, those speeds ... movements faster than the heart-beat ... operations that the muscles and the eye had to do by themselves instantly without the need for me to think at all.'(15)

For many years migrant workers in Turin had had to put up with the racist discrimination of landlords, the social difficulties and isolation of the uprooted single man, and

savage conditions of exploitation at work. Yet the experience of social dislocation and poverty had tended to reduce the capacity and will to resist, which, as studies have shown, depends on 'the workers with firmly established networks ... whilst the newly arrived, whatever their anger, have great difficulty in forming effective organisation'.(16) It was therefore a necessary precondition to the generalised revolts in the Fiat plants that the ice was broken in Spring 1968 by skilled workers, and that a workers' movement was already in an advanced stage of development. The strikes called in protest at the killings at Avola and Battipaglia, and the union's campaign of action against the 'wage zones', which institutionalised lower rates of pay in the South, related directly to the migrant workers.(17) However, in the case of Fiat, it was the students and political activists who played a more important role than the unions in providing the network of communications (leaflets, factory gate presence, meetings in bars) which enabled workers simply to get to know kindred spirits and to organise. Moreover, the students communicated the idea of the larger movement in society.

In Spring 1969 Fiat was hit by what Reyneri describes as 'a continuous guerrilla offensive'.(18) The demand for regrading whole sections set off a chain reaction so that the interdependence of the productive process operated to the advantage of collective action by workers. Fiat became the '<u>locus classicus</u>' of 'permanent conflict' along with Pirelli.

Action stopped completely only for the period of the August holidays. Immediately on return the Mirafiori plant workers, independently of the union, put in a demand for a 1,000 lire pay rise. Fiat suspended 7,000 workers to make them all 'pay' for the disruption. The result of the show-down was that the union confederations brought forward the date for action for the renewal of the engineering sector contract. On September 25th 50,000 engineering workers took part in a national demonstration.

Events at Fiat shook the provincial city of Turin like an earthquake. The student movement had created a cultural and social crisis in middle class households; the workers' movement shook the very foundations of the social order.(19) In turn, Italian national life was deeply affected. Above all, the rebellion in its most radical forms expressed a refusal of 'industrial culture', of a work-discipline that structured both life in the factory and outside it.(20) Nanni Balestrini in his autobiography recalls this refusal:

> 'The thing on which we were all
> together was our will, our logic,
> our discovery that work was the
> only enemy, the only sickness ...
> the discovery that we all had the
> same needs and the same necessities.'(21)

However, it was not only the Southerners' rejection of socialisation into work-discipline, but their adaptation of their own traditions and culture of resistance to the Turin situation that determined the forms of their revolt.(22) Thus, in July 1969 a trade union demonstration over housing was transformed into riots and street battles with the police.

Whilst it would be inaccurate to describe the quasi-insurrectionary action as 'Southern', nevertheless the rapid resort to violent action and the attacks on the municipal buildings of the 'red areas' ('cintura rossa') were part of a political repertoire more rooted in the South.

Inside the factories the workers' rebellion expressed a radical antagonism to the factory itself as an institution. In contrast to the Pirelli workers of Milan, the Fiat workers delighted more in disruption than in the autonomous regulation of production. Sabotage was endemic. Such incidents of the conflict have been described as manifestations of 'political primitivism' and as the first glimmerings of trade unionism.(23) A Fiat worker recalls that during the first 'internal marches' there was an incident in which a worker from the South led his work-mates, carrying the head of a rabbit stuck on a pole. The 'rabbit' ('coniglio') was the 'scab'. It symbolised fear and cowardice, and also 'unmanliness'.(24) Such theatrical manifestations of mass defiance certainly had little to do with the 'model' of 'modern unionism'. Moreover, in some respects the identification of the principal enemy in the 'scab' or the foreman indicated a lack of what Gramsci called 'consciousness of the historical identity or exact limits of the adversary'.(25) However, there are gross inadequacies in analyses which dismiss such incidents as expressions of a 'primitive' view of the world.

Approaches which posit an evolutionary development

assume a progression from 'primitive' and 'pre-political' forms to 'modern political' forms. Stages of development (often related to the formation of the nation-state or the rise of the market-economy) are said to mark the boundaries between them. Thus, within a Marxist view, utopian socialism and anarchism are stepping stones on the path leading to a scientific politics and party organisation.(26) Or, within the perspective of a trade unionist, sabotage and wildcat strikes are often seen as 'regressive' and 'primitive' hangovers from an earlier point in union history. In the postwar period in Italy dominant versions of both Marxism and sociology accepted a model of 'progress' and 'modernisation' (hence the endless debates about Italian 'backwardness').(27) Trade unions and parties too competed with one another to appear 'modern' and future-oriented. In other words, much, though not all, of the cultural and ideological perspectives across the political spectrum, were ill-suited to make sense of the strange events in Turin. They were in no way prepared for what took place.

In contrast, there were political and cultural currents, which had grown in influence through the student movement, which welcomed, promoted and theorised 'primitivism'. Or, rather, they maintained that the rebellion in the factories was 'anti-capitalist'. Its very excesses and extremes of behaviour signified a fundamental rejection of the way of life and values of 'the society of the factory'.

In part, this opinion sprang from a revival of 'revolutionary romanticism'.(28) The rebel migrant worker

symbolised suffering and resistance. He (it was never a 'she') was one of Fanon's 'damned of the earth' - outcast, exiled, oppressed and exploited. He embodied images and ideas which reverberated in the post '68 political culture. But these had an added intensity because they connected up with a rich iconography within Italian culture. In particular, the migrant worker pricked the guilty conscience of the North towards the Southerner.(29) He brought to mind films like Visconti's 'Rocco and his Brothers', and images of lonely men with cardboard boxes for suitcases who slept in railway stations. But he was also the fighter, the passionate rebel, and this was the hero who was fêted by the young students at the factory gates. It was these 'positive' images which were counterposed to the 'negative' images of suffering and resignation which were associated with Catholic thinking. (Later this positive image appeared in the shape of 'Gasparazzo', a humourous but affectionate cartoon-strip in Lotta Continua.)(30)

Enthusiasm for the factory rebellion also took more theorised forms. The 'operaist' Marxist intellectuals, many of whom had done their apprenticeship in the Quaderni Rossi, greeted the Fiat workers' action as the equivalent in practice of their ideas in theory.(31) For them, it was not the 'migrant worker', but the 'mass worker' who was the embodiment of a new class subjectivity. This is worth noting because in the operaist theory the 'weak link in the capitalist chain' was where capitalism was most advanced and, seemingly, strongest; namely, in the modern factory and not

in the 'Third World' nor in the person of the poor peasant, the marginals and so on, as a more romantic vision would have it. For operaists the Fiat workers' resort to violent and disruptive methods was not a sign of backwardness, but of their vanguard role. It showed their refusal of capitalist planning and waged labour.

> '(Taylorism) has above all completely and definitively estranged the worker from the content of his work; it has made him understand that the only way to freedom lies not in the exaltation of 'productive labour' but in the final abolition of waged work.'(32)

The demands raised by operaists and taken up in the 'worker-student mass meetings' during the Hot Autumn expressed a total disregard for normal forms of organisation and mediation; the chants 'we want everything' and 'we are all delegates' could make no sense to the trade union official or the party politician, but they were music to the ears of the operaists.

It is too simplistic to divide the 'romantics' from the 'operaists' even though they came from different cultural currents and milieux.(33) It is interesting to observe, rather, that the factory worker himself became a modern hero, and that the mass-production line had a spell-binding fascination for a new generation of intellectuals, students and others of non-working class origins. Even if much of the language of operaist theory tended to be dry and abstract, it contained moments of poetic intoxication. For example, sabotage was frequently described as an act of joy and

liberation. In Lotta Continua, a paper launched during the Hot Autumn, operaist theory and revolutionary romanticism combined in celebrations of rebellion.(34)

The Turin events were of great importance to the development of the workers' movement because they took place in the heart of Italy's largest company.(35) In other words, they mattered politically and economically, and gave a sense of power to the movement in the first days of the engineering contract dispute. But the events need in turn to be related to their historical and cultural significance. Since the time of the factory council movement of 1919-20, workers' struggles at Fiat had been of great symbolic importance for the Italian Communist Party and the CGIL, and for all communists of whatever persuasion. A mountain of literature, including, of course, studies in Quaderni Rossi, testifies to the interest not only of organisers, but of historians, sociologists and others in the Fiat case.(36) When, therefore, thousands of Fiat workers defied the directives of unions and parties alike and held mass meetings in conjunction with extremist students, their behaviour resonated throughout the political culture of the Left. It dramatically heightened expectations of radical change. In the words of Nanni Balestrini:

> 'By now something was obvious in these meetings; all the workers had the impression that this was a decisive phase in the conflict between us and the bosses ... In fact, frequent use was made of the word 'revolution'.'(37)

The Turin events seemed to show that the workers' movement represented something far more radical than the unions and parties, and that, if other cities followed suit, the whole peninsula might be ready for revolutionary change.

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 18

1. Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 4, p. 14.

2. See Part 2, Chapter 6.

3. Sergio Turone, Storia del sindacato, p. 486.

4. It would be instructive to map the changes in the use of such metaphors. The metaphor of the 'body politick' and of its 'humours' dates back to the Middle Ages if not further. The continuities, at first sight, are more striking than the differences. For a brilliant essay on crowd-imagery, see Christopher Hill, 'The Many-Headed Monster in late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking', in C. H. Carter (Ed.), From the Renaissance to the Counter-Revolution (London, 1968).

5. Quoted by Charles Woolfson, 'The Semiotics of Working Class Speech' in Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 9, 1976, p. 170.

6. L'Unità (21-8-69).

7. Rome was, and is, a city of service industries and government offices. Industry employs relatively few people, and the engineering sector, which was so central in 1968-9, had no companies of the order of Fiat, Alfa Romeo or Sit Siemens.

8. Percy Allum, Politics and Society in Postwar Naples (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 89-119, pp. 250-261.

9. This incident was an isolated example of a form of struggle which was widespread in the 19th Century Italy before wage struggles prevailed; see Federico Bozzini, Il Furto Campestre - una forma di lotta di massa (Milan, 1977). It is interesting to note, however, that Renato Curcio, future founder of the Red Brigades, drove immediately down to Cutro and wrote a report of events. For him, Cutro was not the spurt of dying embers but the flame of a proletarian tradition that had to be revived; see Alessandro Silj, 'Mai più senza fucile', pp. 61-3.

10. There was considerable controversy at the time as to whether the revolt was fascist-led and organised, or a popular insurrection. Whatever the validity of their analyses, there were those who saw the Southern revolt as something to be emulated in the North. Far from being backward struggles, they were greeted as the vanguard; see Luigi Bobbio, Lotta Continua, pp. 90-3.

11. Lotta Continua (11-12-70).

12. G. Guidi, A. Bronzino and L. Germanetta, Fiat: struttura aziendale e organizzazione dello sfruttamento (Milan, 1974), pp. 17-31.

13. This phrase was a commonplace among a vivid range of images and metaphors used to describe life at Fiat; these include 'monsters', 'infernoes', 'labyrinths', 'nightmares'; for example, see M. Cavallini, Il terrorismo in fabbrica, p. 29.

14. Nanni Balestrini, Vogliamo tutto (Milan, 1974), p. 53.

15. Ibid., p. 60.

16. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France pp. 272-273.

17. See V. Foa, Lotte operaie e sindacato, pp. 171-173.

18. E. Reyneri, 'Comportamento di classe', p. 860.

19. The dramatic effect of these movements on everyday life in Turin was all the greater because of the provincialism and conservatism of the city, in contrast to Milan which was better able to absorb changes.

20. For a fuller analysis of this refusal based on study of the making of the English working class, see E. P. Thompson, Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism in Past and Present, 38, 1967.

    Thompson's writing stresses that conflicts were to do with values and 'ways of life', and were not reducible to narrow conceptions of the economic struggles.

21. N. Ballestrini, Vogliamo tutto, p. 98.

22. Vittorio Foa draws attention to the 'unevenesses' and 'contradictions' in the development of the industrial proletariat: 'There is no linear tendency for a proletarian culture to progressively adapt to the waged work ethic; the proletariat carries within itself many pieces of its autonomous historical culture, peasant and artisan, which appear only to be extreme defences against bourgeois culture, or as nostalgia for a vanished past. Yet, instead, they are weapons of attack with which to overturn capitalism'; Vittorio Foa, 'Il sindacato di fronte alla transizione', in Problemi del Socialismo, 5, 1977, p. 155.

23. M. Cavallini, Il terrorismo in fabbrica, p. 47.

24. A limited, but much referred to, group of animals figured in the language of the movements. Apart from 'rabbits', 'pigs' and 'guard dogs', which played a major role, the 'tiger' was often 'ridden'. The Chinese love of calling enemies by animal names only partly explains this recrudescence of animal imagery.

25. A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, p. 273. This anthropomorphism took a more sinister and systematic form in terrorist discourses and action; see Part 5, Chapter 23, pp. 502-503.

26. This conception is at the heart of Gramsci's writings, which echo his struggles to 'nationalise' an Italian political culture that he saw as backward and provincial; A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp. 125-205.

For a sophisticated historical account of this kind, see Eric Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels (Manchester, 1959). This was translated in 1966 and became an influential book in Italy. Much cruder applications of Engels' model abound. For a critique of this model of history writing in Italy, see Federico Bozzini and Maurizio Carbognin, Perchè parlare di storia, Mimeographed.

27. Diana Pinto has written of the 'modernisation' model as 'the dream that failed to materialise ... there were 'cracks' in the model well before the international economic crisis of the 1970's. Nowhere ... more analytically visible than in Italy'. But in the 1950's and 1960's its tenets, namely a quasi-mechanistic emphasis on economic growth and a structural-functionalist outlook, were hegemonic. 'An archeology (à la Foucault) of the term 'modernisation' would shed light on the essence of our postwar period'; D. Pinto (Ed.), Introduction to Contemporary Italian Sociology, pp. 4-5.

28. This notion needs to be made historical. The connection of revolution and romanticism goes back to the early 19th century, but the Risorgimento, especially as represented by Giuseppe Garibaldi, gave rise to a specifically Italian tradition. In 1968, however, it was an international and European phenomenon. The figure of Che Guevara was emblematic, see John Berger's essay, ''Che' Guevara' in J. Berger, Selected Essays and Articles (London, 1972).

29. The 'myth' of the South has been periodically rediscovered. For example, the earthquake of 1980 brought it back to the centre of Italian consciousness. Gabriella Gribaudi outlines the dominant themes: 'On the one side, there is the tear-jerking image of a South which is peasant, archaic, immobile and solidaristic; on the other, there is its antithesis - a South which is lawless, where people kill each other in the struggle over scarce resources'. These pictures of the South say more about

In other words, for the operaists contemporary Fiat workers were rebelling not only against the factory system, but against the productivist politics of the PCI and trade unions; for a 'popularised' version of these ideas, see Lotta Continua (6-12-69); for a sophisticated theorisation, see Sergio Bologna, 'Class composition and the theory of the party at the origin of the workers councils movement', in CSE Pamphlet No. 1, The Labour Process and Class Strategies (London, 1976).

37. N. Balestrini, Vogliamo tutto, p. 106; Balestrini's book has as its title a famous slogan of the movement - 'we want everything'. This autobiographical account of his journey from the South to the Fiat factories is interesting also as an example of a genre which was an ideal vehicle for 'revolutionary romanticism'. Balestrini made literature and poetry out of the mass worker's experiences. See Pierre Laroche, 'La classe ouvrière dans le roman italien', in Le Monde Diplomatique, (December) 1974, p. 31.

CHAPTER 19: THE HOT AUTUMN IN MILAN

The Turin events overshadowed developments of the workers' movement elsewhere in Italy from the Spring to October 1969. Attention then focused again on Milan because of continued conflict at Pirelli and because of street clashes between demonstrators and police in early November which drew the State more openly into the industrial disputes. The contract season and the year ended, finally, under the dark shadow of the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan. These events will be dealt with in turn in the following chapters, along with an analysis of the engineering workers' contract struggle.

Pirelli Under Siege

L'Unità announced a 'hot autumn for bosses': 'A massive strike has stopped Pirelli - 11,000 in struggle ... picket-lines include 'technicians, clerical workers, young workers and women... A scene which recalls those at the Fiat gates'.(1) A dispute had been simmering since May over questions of 'union rights' - the recognition of elected delegates, a factory council with paid time-off, mass meetings in works time. This made the dispute of vital symbolic importance since one of the primary objectives of the unions engaged in all the contract disputes was to win full recognition within the factories. Pirelli was a test-case - the company was represented in the highest echelons of the Confindustria. The popular slogan of the

moment 'Agnelli, Pirelli - ladri gemelli' (Agnelli, Pirelli - twin thieves') linked the different struggles against the 'captains of industry'. The fierceness of Pirelli's and other companies' resistance proved much greater on issues of authority than on economic concessions.

The resort by Pirelli workers to their by now well-established tactics of sporadic sectional stoppages met with a company response that increased the stakes, which in turn provoked a radicalisation of the conflict. On September 23rd Pirelli imported tyres from its Greek subsidiary; the same day lorry-loads of the tyres were set alight and the management declared a lock-out, denouncing 'vandalism ... illegitimate forms of agitation ... violence and the threat of violence against persons'.(2) The union confederations in the province of Milan called a one hour general strike, and the Pirelli workers began to 'autoreduce production' by 45%. Although the lock-out was revoked, a leading militant was sacked for his part in disruptive action. There was a spontaneous strike and a demonstration in which the worker was carried back into the factory. L'Unità commented on the 'degree of tension' that could produce such 'unplanned action', whilst the Corriere della Sera horrified its readers with accounts of 'Chinese' subversion so that some workers responded by carrying placards on a demonstration with the words: 'We are not Chinese'.(3)

The Pirelli workers in a sense forced the population of Milan to take sides. The city itself became the stage

on which the conflict was fought out; massive demonstrations involving up to 50,000, and workers' road-blocks were joined by delegations from hundreds of factories and by thousands of students. Milan's everyday life was at a standstill. L'Unità wrote:

> 'The rising fever of union agitation has given the Milanese another day of ferment. Articulated strikes, demonstrations, improvised meetings and road blocks, have transformed the city and its hard-working surroundings into a boiling outpost of the numerous labour conflicts that have come to a head this 'Hot Autumn'.'(4)

For L'Unità the sight was impressive for the degree of organisation shown by the workers and for their 'coolness and intelligence' in the face of police provocation. The existence of the CUB was not mentioned nor were most unofficial actions. The sabotage of the tyres was attributed to the activity of 'agents provocateurs'. By contrast the Corriere della Sera played up the most disturbing elements of the conflict. What seems clear, however, is that the Pirelli workers enjoyed considerable support to the point that even the Christian Democrat Party federation in Milan condemned the lock-out.(5) A protagonist's account of the siege of the Pirelli headquarters gives a vivid picture of how workers rallied to support their fellows:

> 'The blocking of the Pirelli skyscraper for three days and nights ... meant stopping the brain of an international operation which could not afford to be cut off from the rest of the world for so long ... The participation was enthusiastic, and even included white collar workers. Thousands took part ... lorry-drivers gave lifts along with the ATM buses. On this occasion

> (by way of establishing a tradition) public transport was used without payment ... you simply said 'Pirelli will pay'.(6)

The dangerous escalation of the dispute prompted the intercession of Donat Cattin, the Minister of Labour, and the signing of an agreement on November 14th which conceded the main demands made by the unions.

Engineering Workers in Milan

The Hot Autumn in the engineering industry in Milan did not have the dramatic and ruptural impact it had in Turin. It was the largest sector of industry but small and medium-sized companies predominated. No single company compared to Fiat in size. In the Milanese engineering industry skilled workers engaged in machine-tool production rather than the semi-skilled assembly workers formed the back-bone of the labour force. Moreover, a relatively high percentage were unionised.(7) Even Alfa Romeo, which employed nearly 14,000 workers, many of whom were from the South, did not undergo a Hot Autumn similar to Fiat's. In 1966 there were serious riots starting in the Alfa Romeo factory at Arese, but the combination of the firm grip of the unions and the subtler approach of the State-appointed management prevented their repetition.(8)

The struggles of engineering workers in Milan were less radical than those in Turin, and the size and complexity of the city enabled it to absorb the shocks more easily. Nonetheless, they raised demands, and developed forms of

organisation and action which made them expressions of a social movement. Fundamental questions about the 'social contract' as well as about the industrial contract were opened up. These will be examined under the headings: demands, actions and organisation.

More Than A Contract: The Movement's Demands

In preparation for the autumn campaign for the renewal of the engineering contract, the unions launched a massive 'consultation' of workers' opinions before drawing up the platform of demands. The level of participation and debate exceeded expectations and, in turn, generated new ones. Meetings in July turned into occasions for freely airing grievances, and took place whilst company disputes were still in full swing. Previously, unions had scarcely involved workers in this procedure;

> 'Before, the union used to give you a sheet and asked you: 'What do you want? This, this and this' ... After the negative experience of the 1966 contracts, the workers themselves took positions ... The unions were forced to be more democratic, even if they tried to manipulate meetings. For example at Borletti, the demand for the abolition of the lowest grades and of the piece-rate system were not accepted.'(9)

L'Unità reported that there was a 'decisive rejection of the long working day and of heavy workloads', and that the majority of workers favoured lump sum wage increases, in preference to traditional percentage increases.(10) The lump sum increase was therefore incorporated into the platform,

despite opposition by some officials.

The final list of demands included as its main items: equal wage rises for all; a 40 hour week within 3 years; progress towards manual-clerical worker parity; the elimination of differentials for those under 20; union rights inside the factories. The package as a whole represented a considerable challenge since it aimed at making up for the loss of earnings in the mid to late '60's, and at ending decades of unilateral management decision-making in the workplace. Moreover, they were demands with which the workers identified and which were open to control from below, unlike some of the more technical-style demands.(11)

The demands formulated in the platform and the demands arising in the movement of the Hot Autumn should not, however, be treated as synonymous. To fully understand the movement's demands it is necessary to look at their informal manifestations in slogans and graffiti, leaflets and papers, and in the whole panoply of demonstrations and strikes. Above all, that workers said what they wanted to one another, directly. Unfortunately, studies have tended to concentrate on the formal demands (and those written down). The language of ordinary workers is neither listened to nor analysed. Certain logics are ascribed to the workings of the movement, which are not explored in relation to the richness of the protagonists' experiences.(12)

The gap between the approach and objectives of the union organisations and the workers on the shopfloor can

be seen in the case of Borletti, where a workers' inquiry into the conditions of women workers was carried out in June-July '69. It gives a picture of their preoccupations as shown by an alternative form of 'consultation' from below, initiated by the factory CUB. The idea of the workers' inquiry was inspired by writings in Quaderni Rossi. It was simple enough; workers, it was maintained, knew much more about their workplace than all the parliamentary commissions and experts put together; instead of waiting to be consulted, they should do some research, make known their finding and organise around a set of concrete demands arising from them.(13) These were then framed within a general political perspective; for example, the Borletti CUB report stated:

> 'To see and understand at first hand what our real working conditions are, to understand how all this is the logical and inevitable consequence of an entire system - this is the first step in becoming conscious, of the necessity of organising and struggling against it.'(14)

The inquiry, based on 150 interviews, comes up with data on: the unskilled nature of women's work (23% learnt their job in less than half-an-hour, 77% in less than a day); the lowness of wages (83% averaged 70,000 lire whilst the average rent at the time was estimated to be 30-40,000 lire). But more importantly, the work-situation is related to the personal lives of the workers. 66% of the women workers declare difficulties in making friendships at work ('there's too little time to talk'), whilst for almost half of them 1-2 hours a day are spent travelling

to and from the factory. The tensions resulting from work are shown to damage physical health; the majority complain of constipation, headaches, breathing and heart problems, that have arisen since starting work at Borletti. Furthermore 'a good 90% of women say that they are habitually agitated, sad and irritated' and that this was especially felt through irregular periods and an unsatisfactory sex life.(15)

The process of this 'counter-consultation' at Borletti heightened awareness and stimulated demands that the union platform excluded; the opposition to piece-rates sprang from a feeling that they divided workers, and that they encouraged productivity at the expense of health; the demand for the abolition of the lowest grades reflected the discontent of women workers who were systematically paid less than men who did the same work, but none of whom were in the lowest grades.(16) Moreover, the debate and discussion opened up by the workers' inquiry stimulated general awareness of life-problems in relation to work. An article written soon after the Hot Autumn entitled: 'Spontaneous Reflections of a Woman Worker', is full of anger;

> 'those who do overtime ... often say there is nothing but work. At this point we have been thoroughly brutalised by the bosses'.

Such is the nature of 'this disgusting society' ('<u>questo schifo di società</u>').(17)

The movement at Borletti, on the evidence of the leaflets and papers of both the unions and the CUB, made demands speaking as workers ('<u>operai</u>') rather than as women.

Nevertheless, as Rina Barbieri recalls, her struggle, like that of fellow workers, was different because of her gender:

> 'They (the men) did give you credit for being a serious and committed person, and they knew very well that it cost you immense sacrifices ... Yet, even if it isn't that you put forward questions of women's liberation, all in all, at an unconscious level, when you raised issues about the problems suffered by women (piece-rates, nursery facilities) it seemed an enormous injustice to you.'(18)

Women workers were especially concerned about working conditions. They were among those (migrant workers being another group), who suffered the worst consequences of speed-ups, increased work-loads and systematic de-skilling of tasks, which were officially sanctioned by systems of grading and payment.

The vehemency of their demands on these issues emerged in 1969. At the end of April women in the upholstery shop at Alfa Romeo struck for parity, regrading and individual payment of piece-rates.(19) And at Pirelli women were especially combative because they were the main losers from the piece-rate system. It is notable, however, that the demands for the new contract showed no connection with the women's demands for genuine parity in place of the formal parity which the unions had won in 1960.(20)

The gap between the formal demands of the Confederal platform and the informal demands on the shopfloor was most evident in relation to groups of unskilled workers (and in particular migrants and women, and also younger workers).

Their grievances tended to be specific and localised, and were therefore difficult to integrate into a general platform. They came into conflict with management over problems of work organisation (line speeds etc.) and authoritarianism. Direct action rather than negotiation through the unions offered immediate and effective redress. Actions were made to speak louder than words, and words were not softly spoken.

Guido Viale described the new modes of self-expression as the 'cultural revolution in Italian factories'; for him, actions such as the burning of the Pirelli Greek tyres were:

> 'a liberatory act consciously and collectively decided upon ... the same is happening in the posters, the writings and carvings which are filling the factories; it began in the lavatories, canteens and dressing-rooms, and now they are also found on the shopfloor and in the offices, done under the very eyes of the foremen ... Workers are learning to put to creative use the instruments of their oppression ... in many factories they are using the foremen's telephones to communicate and organise struggles.'(21)

At Borletti and in other factories dazibao were attached to the walls, in the manner of the Chinese Cultural Revolution popularised in Italy by the student movement; workers wrote up comments as they wished. Outside every factory the walls became red with spray-paint. Outside a Sit Siemens plant, by the gate, was written: 'Liberty finishes here'.(22) Among the great mass of workers there was a tremendous desire to talk about general issues, about 'politics' in the

broadest sense, a desire to have a say, to communicate their feelings to the world and also to listen - a situation that is perhaps only created at the highpoints of popular movements.

The demonstration was the main occasion on which workers addressed the world and shouted their demands in unison. During the Hot Autumn, marches criss-crossed Milan almost every day. They were important moments for the expression of a collective sense of identity. Aldo Marchetti writes:

> 'Above all, it was perhaps the only situation in which the 'working class' effectively appeared as one, indivisible, equal and en masse. Inside the factory there existed differences of grade, status and pay, and in rights of access to places and in the language spoken; in the street all that seemed to disappear. The 'working class in struggle' marched through the city as a homogeneous mass and whoever entered its ranks was absorbed.'(23)

In this period of mass agitation the differences between union members was of little significance. 'A spirit of solidarity and brotherhood bound everyone together'. It was an experience that was often intensely felt. A description of participating in a workers' demonstration written at a later date by Nanni Balestrini gives a vivid picture of this:

> 'It is a hot feeling of sweat all over the body like a hot bath of pleasure; I am very relaxed and at the same time very ardent ... There are tens of thousands; it is impossible to count them all. I feel involved with my whole body to its very core as when a high-pitched note sounds.'(24)

But this evocation presents a particular romantic vision of the demonstration. Demonstrations also contained an important element of play and theatre. Aldo Marchetti notes that demonstrations bore resemblances to the traditional carnival:

> 'From the carnival was taken the use of allegorical floats, which became lorries bedecked in various ways ... Often they carried puppets of bosses and government ministers hanging from a gallows, and these were burnt at the factory gates at the end of the march ... As in a carnival the demonstration created a sense of the world being turned upside down; for a day or a morning roles were reversed, and the workers became masters of their own time, of the city streets and business-centre, and of themselves'.(25)

And, of course, the demonstration was also an occasion when men and women met and mixed together. The public event created spaces for private encounters.(26)

The demonstration was a form of symbolic communication. The linked arms, the orderly ranks and the often regular step of the demonstrators (and, of course, the very effect of having thousands of people in the streets) projected an image of power with military connotations. This desire to communicate and to count is evident in the chanting of slogans and singing of songs which made demonstrations noisy occasions. It seemed at times as if a thunderstorm was breaking over the city. Often it was not what was being shouted that mattered, but the shouting. Yet slogans also condensed basic demands and produced a sense of direction.

A list of slogans put together by the Sit Siemens factory council for use on demonstrations, gives a fairly representative sample of what trade union activists regarded as popular and appropriate:[27]

> Agnelli-Pirelli-ladri gemelli
> (Agnelli-Pirelli-twin thieves)
>
> Operai - più sfruttati, padroni ben pagati
> (Workers more exploited, bosses well paid)
>
> Siamo - stanchi - di pagare - tutti - vizi - dei padroni
> (We are tired of paying for all the bosses' vices)
>
> Siamo sempre - più incazzati - coi padroni e i decretoni
> (We are ever more pissed off with the bosses and the decrees)
>
> Governo Rumor - governo ladro
> (Rumor government - thieves' government)
>
> Mille - miliardi - d'evasioni - questa è la legge dei padroni
> (Thousands and millions of tax evasions - this is the bosses' law)
>
> La vita - col cottimo - è un calvario - l'affitto - è un furto - sul salario
> (Life on the piece-rate is a Calvary, rent is a theft out of the wage-packet)

What is immediately notable about these slogans is that they denounce aspects of the social system that were particularly resented in Italy in 1969. The themes of the gross inequalities of distribution, the corruption and moral turpitude of the ruling class, and of the exploitation and suffering of the workers were recurrent.

The notion of <u>injustice</u> and the sense of <u>moral outrage</u> is strongly present in the slogans, and this accords with some of Barrington Moore's observations on what, historically and cross-culturally, has most often provoked popular protest.

It is not the facts of inequality and exploitation that anger the lower classes so much as what are seen as excesses. The key to understanding this is the 'social contract' which is arrived at by

> 'continuous probing on the part of rulers and subjects to find out what they can get away with, to test and discover the limits of obedience and disobedience ... The more stable the society, the narrower the range within which this takes place.'(28)

It is what is perceived as the breaching of the contract which engenders outrage. Such is the case when the law-makers ('bosses') break the laws (e.g. evade taxes, or, in the case of politicians, take bribes); or, when the money of the workers is spent on luxurious living by idlers, parasites and blood-suckers; or, when the hard-won wages are 'stolen' in rents. Another slogan popular during the Hot Autumn sums up the feeling of gross injustice: 'ci sfruttano, ci ammazzano, ci sbattono in galera - e questa la chiamano liberta' (they exploit us, kill us and throw us in prison, and they call it freedom).

The 'contract' that was seen to be flouted was not, as Barrington Moore underlines, a formal set of articles. It was rather an invisible set of codes governing acceptable behaviour and underpinning the reciprocity of the relationship between 'rulers' and 'ruled'. This helps to explain the strong note of moralism in slogans of condemnation. This also had roots in a morality with an established place in the workers' movement since its inception (note the Proudhonian ring to the slogan: 'rent is theft'), but which

was expressed with a new vigour and spontaneity in the Hot Autumn. The dignity of the worker is even lent religious undertones (e.g. the piece-rate as the 'Calvary' of the worker), by contrast with the moral degradation of the corrupt and inhuman 'bosses'. Wealth is not acceptable, especially if it is flaunted; this was made clear in a letter, addressed by workers of some Milanese factories to the mayor, in which they told him that the opening night at La Scala

> 'will be offensive to the workers if, with the struggle of the engineering workers under way, the traditional ostentation and show of wealth and luxury take place.'

The workers threatened a mass picket if it went ahead.(29)

The slogans so far considered should, however, be supplemented by others which were more extreme, and which were not promoted by the trade unions but came from the shopfloor or from revolutionary groups. Examples of these are given by Marchetti:

> 'Tutto il potere - agli operai'
> (All power to the workers)
>
> 'Più soldi - meno lavoro'
> (More money - less work)
>
> 'Lo stato dei padroni - si abbatte e non si cambia'
> (The bosses' state is for smashing not changing)
>
> 'Cosa volete? Tutto. Quando? Subito'
> (What do you want? Everything. When? Immediately)
>
> 'Siamo tutti delegati'
> (We are all delegates)

Marchetti comments that these slogans are striking for their simplicity; they express non-negotiable demands, and

evoke a utopia - a world without bosses; they demand immediate gratifications.(30)

During the Hot Autumn the shout 'Contract. Contract' became more and more insistent. It was the simple demand that all the unions' claims should be met. But that call, when shouted in unison by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, was invested with hopes and expectations of radical social change. And there were slogans which expressed a desire not just for an improvement in the terms of 'social contract' (or its real application) but for a new order of things. The fears and anxieties voiced by the press were more concerned with the range of the testing of the 'limits of obedience and disobedience', than with the engineering contract itself. The challenges to authority, not only in the factories, but in the schools and streets of the cities, seemed to many observers to be going beyond the acceptable realms of carnival.

Strange Strikes: Forms of Industrial Action

As has been mentioned, strikes were already in progress or erupting at Fiat and other companies before the campaign of action was officially launched by the union confederations in September. There was a strike movement in being which arose independently of the unions. The unions then stepped in to programme the industrial action. Firstly, the number of hours of strikes per week were allocated centrally, and each workplace was left free to use them as it saw fit. Secondly,

some strikes were co-ordinated on a geographical basis (by zone, by city and by province, and nationally) in the public and private sectors, and by industry or across industries. This strategy enabled the unions to calibrate the action according to the amount of pressure they wanted to exert, and to deploy the forces of the movement. Thus, as the winter drew on, the action was escalated overall, and particular pressure was applied first to the public, and then to the private sectors of the engineering industry.

In Milan there were remarkable possibilities for 'articulating' industrial action by zones, since these often had strong identities historically, which, since 1968, had been strengthened by extensive contacts between factories.(31) It was particularly important given the dispersal of small units. Thus the small La Crouset components factory, which employed mainly migrant women, became heavily dependent on the Sempione zone for support in its difficult fight against repressive paternalism. In November, the 220,000 workers of the chemical sector in Milan, who were also in dispute over their contract, joined the engineering workers for a day of strikes. However, apart from solidarity action around Pirelli, there was little co-ordination across industries, although this was called for on the shopfloor. More common was the strike by a whole industry in the province; for example, 100,000 engineering workers struck simultaneously on October 7th. The main focus of action, however, was in the various factories where the enthusiasm for strike action often meant that the union quotas of hours were exceeded.

L'Unità reported that during the first four weeks of action in Milan 300,000 workers, on average, were in dispute each day.(32) The proliferation of action provoked the Corriere della Sera into introducing a 'calendar of agitation' to guide the readers through the turmoil. At the end of 1969 the resulting total of hours lost in the engineering sector in Milan province was 71,181,182 (96% of which were due to strikes over the new contract).(33)

The statistics on the number of hours lost due to strikes give some idea of the scale of industrial action. However, they only show the tip of the iceberg; the incidence of absenteeism, and forms of non-collaboration which restricted the planned use of labour-power do not appear in the statistics.(34) During the Hot Autumn, the decisive battles were fought 'informally'; the engineering workers took action to control and regulate their working conditions (controlling the speeds of the line, piece-rates, job-assignment, health and safety, mobility, job and wage structure, limits to disciplinary measures, restructuring and regulation of hours as in shift-working and overtime). These questions had traditionally been the almost exclusive prerogative of management in Italian industry, but in the late '60's there was a war situation along what Carter Goodrich referred to as the 'frontier of control'.(35)

The metaphor of 'war' is recurrent in contemporary descriptions of industrial conflict.(36) People spoke not so much about the 'two sides of industry' (a formulation that suggests dependence as well as difference), as about

two opposing camps. Nor was it a 'war', it seems, which was conducted according to set rules prescribing the use of certain weapons and laying down codes of behaviour.(37) As a popular slogan put it; 'The factory is our Vietnam'; guerrilla-warfare provided the model for worker 'insurgents' even if managements wanted to keep to the existing rules. A leaflet of the Borletti CUB of October 1960 is of particular interest in this respect. It opens with a quotation from the president of the Confindustria on hiccup strikes:

> 'these forms of action that cost the industrialists a lot and the workers nothing are illegal. It is useless to come to agreements between generals (the unions and the employers) if subsequently the troops (the working class) do not respect them.'(38)

The leaflet goes on to draw some conclusions; namely, that the power of this 'weapon' is borne out by the employers' opposition to it; workers should use whatever means of struggle necessary since 'it is their sacrosanct RIGHT' - 'the only criteria are the interests of the working class'; the 'legality of which they speak is their legality, the same one that allows our exploitation'. There then follows a list of possible actions: the articulation of strikes by shifts and sections, autoreduction ('Pirelli teaches us'), pickets of the RAI TV, and non-payment of TV licences.

The strikes were enacted - acted out - in a multiplicity of performances. They involved not simply the withdrawal of labour power, but the active assertion of workers' power within the factories. A whole repertoire of disruptive

tactics was developed according to the labour process, composition of the work-forces and its traditions of struggle, the nature of labour relations and other variables. For instance, at Borletti the workers carried out autoreduction on the Pirelli model, but soon stopped. Rina Barbieri recalls:

> 'The women workers ... preferred a quarter-of-an-hour off work ... It was so repetitive they said it was better to lose the wages than stand there ...'(39)

Great pleasure was derived from what were called 'articulated strikes' ('scioperi articolati'), such as the 'hiccup strike', which the Confindustria complained against so bitterly. The 'checker-board strike' was a favourite during the Hot Autumn. The factory was divided up into groups who went on strike for brief periods at different times usually by section or shift.(40) Sometimes zany formulas were concocted whereby workers with names beginning A to L went on strike followed by those at the other end of the alphabet. Whilst the workers amused themselves the production plan fell apart in the hands of frustrated managers. Rina Barbieri refers to workers' feeling of freedom:

> 'it was enough that you struck for half-an-hour in the morning and the same in the evening to make the mechanism break down. When you strike, you go around, pleased as punch ('gazzato'), and you can't be stopped ... When you are busy with a 'checker-board' action not even the gatekeepers manage to understand the comings-and-goings ... The damage to the bosses was enormous by contrast with the

> pre-organised strikes of previous years ... It was the expression of mass creativity and inventiveness.'(41)

This form of struggle was especially popular in mass production factories, like Sit Siemens and Alfa Romeo, which were heavily dependent on the extensive cooperation of the workers.(42) Moreover, at Sit Siemens certain sections had played the role of winning gains that were then generalised throughout the plants, so that 'shop' identities were effectively mobilised through articulated action.

No strike action is reducible to purely economic motivation. The strike action undertaken by a movement such as that of the Hot Autumn is particularly difficult to interpret in terms of monetary calculation. The arithmetics of the articulated strikes expressed what Giorgio Bocca called the desire to 'punish' a 'guilty capitalism'.(43) The industrial action tended to be 'expressive' rather than 'instrumental'; it was not so much geared to the attainment of precise demands, as functional to the formation of a new collective identity with its strong-hold in the workplace. Some of the forms of action achieved this by 'actualising the objective'; for instance, workers met freely together and moved around the factory when they wanted. The workplace was turned into a place for socialising and making friendships. But before this was possible, it was necessary to break the power of the foreman and disrupt the mechanisms which divided workers.

The role of the foremen varied in the different engineering factories, but it was relatively important in Italy because of management's tenacious grip on its prerogatives. He (for it was very rarely a woman) usually allocated overtime, supervised work, recommended transfers for the trouble-makers and promotion for the diligent. The foreman was the immediate enemy on the front-line of the 'frontier of control', and the embodiment of authoritarian and patriarchal rule. Breaking the power of the foreman was often a crucial symbolic moment - a moment which recurs in workers' autobiographies.

Most of the incidences of violence during the Hot Autumn involved foremen. At Fiat the 'red handkerchiefs' (for such were the masks worn by the workers in question) formed a sort of punishment squad which beat up hated foremen or chained them to railings.(44) In Milan episodes of what was called 'proletarian violence' figured less prominantly. Mostly it was a case of 'hard picketing'. At Sit Siemens the personnel manager, Ravalico, was chased by workers after he had attacked a women worker. It required exceptional circumstances to provoke this sort of response, but when such incidents occurred they foregrounded issues of principle. A leaflet commented:

> 'If a worker in a nervous state slaps someone in authority or breaks a window, he risks being sacked. If a manager does the same, nothing happens. All those on the side of the bosses stand up for legality and call chasing scabs ('caccia ai crumiri') violence'.(45)

The violence, of which the foremen were often the victims, represented highpoints of conflict when war was symbolically enacted. Michèle Perrot's observations about strikes in France in the 19th century apply to the Italian events:

> 'Born roughly, suddenly and brutally in the rush of emotion, anger and desire, the strike retains, in part, the whiplash of the primitive wild-cat walk-out. This spontaneity, which weakens its instrumental consequences, guarantees its expressive richness.'(46)

The crisis in the authority of the foreman was also brought about by means other than physical coercion. Physical coercion took place where unions were weakest and managements most jealous of their powers. At Borletti the combination of verbal abuse, humiliations and ribaldry on the part of the workers, on the one hand, and the withdrawal of full management support on the other, drove some foremen to reason 'well, I don't care, I do the best I can'.(47) In a celebrated though isolated case at IBM a foreman denounced his own job in 'supervising exploitation', and his sacking by management provoked a solidarity strike by other workers.(48)

Above all, the crisis in the role of the foremen was the symptom of the crisis of a form of paternalistic management, induced by the collective struggles that culminated in the Hot Autumn. The mechanisms whereby that authority was wielded were challenged and undermined. The remarkable unity created during the Hot Autumn, between skilled and unskilled, workers from different regions, and between men and women workers, made the selective use of rewards and punishments counter-productive. It tended to provoke calls for mass

regrading, parity or solidarity against victimisation. It was now difficult to 'give orders' from above. Factories ceased to be kingdoms ruled by despots, whether enlightened or not, whilst the subjects established their rights with a hundred-and-one informal, everyday resistances.

Democracy in the Workplace: Forms of Organisation

During the Hot Autumn the principal organisations of the workers' movement were the trade unions. These played a crucial role in each phase of the mobilisations, and especially in the closing period when they monopolised negotiations over the contract. (This role will be examined in Chapter 20.) However, before the Hot Autumn, the unions were weakly implanted on the shopfloor, and the vacuum in workers' organisation was filled by remarkable experiments in democracy from below. The examples of Pirelli and Fiat were the most symbolic instances of a wave of democratic self-organisation which spread not only in the workplaces, but in the educational institutions, housing estates and in the city generally. Whilst the student movement opened up political experimentation and debate, the workers' movement seemed to offer better possibilities for bringing about changes. It had great power. Strikes, it had been shown, could shake the economy and governments. But workers also developed autonomous organisations which aspired to a more democratic and egalitarian model of society.

Throughout the Hot Autumn the number of groupings of militant activists such as the CUB and the 'worker-student

groups' increased. In Turin the 'worker-student mass meetings' ('assemblee operai-studenti') dominated the scene. These were regular open meetings in which several thousands participated. In Milan CUB's were set up, following the Pirelli example, at ATM (municipal transport company), Borletti and Innocenti, where they exerted considerable influence. By contrast with the Turin meetings, the CUB's were tight-knit nuclei of experienced activists. Their role was significant, not so much for proposing or pre-figuring a model of self-organisation, as for stimulating it. They were at their most influential during the early stages of mobilisation, as at Pirelli. Crucially, they helped bring workers in touch with the ideas and protagonists of the student movement. However, when the workers' movement launched its strike waves during the Hot Autumn, mass participation and the emergence of a new strata of leaders from the shopfloor diminished the importance of the pioneers.(49)

The meeting ('assemblea') in a factory was the first form of workers' democracy to take shape during the mobilisations of 1968-9. It became a regular event in the majority of engineering factories during the Hot Autumn. It was the product and conquest of the movement. It was a product in as far as a high degree of mutual trust among workers, a sense of common purpose, and a rapid and effective informal network of communication was the precondition for holding meetings. This entailed breaking agreements limiting the mobility of workers in the factory, and defying the foremen.

It was a conquest in that workers established the de facto 'right' to hold meetings, or, to put it in the terminology of the moment, they 'actuated the objective', before it was negotiated by the unions or conceded by the management. The characteristics of the meetings reflected this process.

Firstly, they took place in the workplace during work-hours, thereby enabling maximum participation. Secondly, they involved all workers, irrespective of union membership. Thirdly, they were moments of open discussion and free exchange of information. And lastly, and most significantly, they had a predominantly decision-making function, and were regarded as the sovereign body in the factory.(50) It was through these meetings that the contents of the platform were discussed and the final agreements voted on, but their main function during the strikes was to decide on the forms of action to be taken. The checker-board strike, for instance, required considerable coordination based on a detailed knowledge of the labour processes of a section. However, discussion was not necessarily limited to practicalities in a narrow sense. Questions of mental and physical health were related to the labour process, especially through the contributions of the CUB and other groupings. Furthermore, general political issues were discussed; in November 1969, for example, numerous meetings dealt with repression and the police. Instead of being closed off and isolated, the factory was related in discussion to the everyday lives of workers and the problems of society as a whole.

During strikes and meetings, representatives emerged to make up informal leaderships responsible to the '_assemblea_'. Although there was nothing by way of statutes, the 'delegate' ('_delegato_') was elected directly by all workers in a section, and revocable by them. In the summer of 1969 the unions proposed the formation of strike committees to carry on the industrial action, but the proposal was in many cases a ratification of an existing practice.(51) Rina Barbieri, who became a delegate at Borletti, distinguishes between movement and unions:

> 'Formally speaking the unions organised the struggles, but in practice it was all the workers. I remember how they told us (delegates) what to do: 'you need to do this, and this.' Later it appeared that they were all union members, but had had nothing to do with the union.'(52)

Delegates were elected in the first instance to organise strikes. Workers, who had 'proved themselves' in action by standing up to the foreman, and who commanded the respect of their immediate fellows, made up a 'natural', often charismatic leadership.(53) They owed their positions to force of personality, political acumen, speaking skills and so on rather than to the fact of being in a particular party or union. They depended on 'spontaneous' support, which could be revoked at any meeting of the section or factory.

A factory delegate during the Hot Autumn strikes was a shuttle-cock of frenetic activity. She or he sacrificed a private for a public life, and sought individual satisfaction in collective activities (if, that is, the pressures did not

become too great). In their language 'I' was displaced by 'we'.[54] Delegates resisted the separation from other workers which the logics of trade union organisation entailed. Moreover, widespread participation in meetings and strikes made it difficult for leaders to act independently of their constituencies.

The delegates of the Hot Autumn did not spring up naturally like mushrooms in autumn. The ground had been prepared by the work of independent agitators, and by the encouragement of unions interested in establishing themselves inside the workplaces. However, a new generation of worker representatives had come into being. They tended to be young men, many of whom were semi-skilled or unskilled. Their industrial experience was the product of the 1968-9 mobilisations. These delegates were very different from the older, mainly skilled, and politically affiliated trade unionists who dominated the Internal Commissions.[55] (Except, that is, for the fact that men still tended to become the leaders even in factories with large numbers of women workers, although there were some signs of change.)[56] This change in social composition corrected the gross disparity which had developed between the representatives and represented within the modern factory.

The election of new representatives meant that the problems of the '<u>operaio comune</u>' were put at the top of the agenda at meetings, and that there was a representative on the spot to deal with grievances over line-speeds or under-manning. The delegates had been elected during the

Hot Autumn not to fight a single battle but to lead the everyday skirmishes along the 'frontier of control'. Moreover, the grass-roots democratic structures seemed to many to represent the first step on the path to a new conception of democracy within society as a whole. The sight of workers, who previously had been invisible and unheard, debating politics in factories, piazzas and even universities, inspired visions of a new order in which such a phenomenon would be an everyday occurrence.

The student movement had already popularised notions of 'direct democracy', but had not been able to create durable structures. The workers' movement had proved more successful. Moreover, it represented the force which in the past had founded soviets and workers' councils. In 1968-9 there was a massive revival of council communist ideas, which in Italy were historically associated with the Turin movement of 1912-20 and with Gramsci's Ordine Nuovo writings.(57) Il Manifesto, the group which was expelled from the PCI in November 1969, was perhaps the most articulate representative of this revival. It basically argued for a communism in which the factory councils would be the means of struggling for and creating a democracy of producers. This was seen as an alternative to the party-state model which had been Lenin's legacy to the international communist movement. For Il Manifesto the grass-roots democracy of the students' and workers' movements showed that in the complex societies of the West it was feasible and desirable to create more pluralist forms of representation.(58)

The utopia envisaged by Il Manifesto and by other council communists did touch on the popular utopianism of the times. The factory democracy of the Hot Autumn did embody aspirations which went beyond those of trade union organisers. It affirmed values of community, encouraged freedoms of opinion, and gave practical shape to people's desire to 'count' and be respected.(59) However, the ideas of workers' democracy were highly problematic.

Firstly, it was one thing for workers to organise themselves democratically; it was something quite different to propose that workers organise the capitalist labour process democratically. What the skilled worker could do in 1919 could not be repeated by the worker on the mass production line.(60) Secondly, most models of workers' control assumed that how people organised in the factory could be generalised to the rest of society. Furthermore, they assumed that it was the place where not only goods but society's most significant ideas and values were produced.(61) If the workers movement tended to confirm this factory-centred view of society (which was also male-centred), it was perhaps a sign of its limitations.(62)

November-December 1969: Blood in the Streets

The workers' movement of 1968-9 had its greatest impact within the factories, but also aimed to change society as a whole. In other words, it was political. In November in Milan its political aspects were increasingly apparent. Two demonstrations ended in violent street fighting.

Industrial conflict was framed more and more in terms of 'law and order' in the speeches of politicians and the reports of the media. The sense of a 'state of war' in the factories was translated to society as a whole. There was a shift from a 'moral panic', in which 'extremists' were identified as the 'troublemakers', to a 'general panic' about social order, in which violence was identified as the symptom of a more wide-spread malaise.(63)

According to accounts coming from accredited spokesmen, violence was no longer just caused by a minority ('cinesi', 'extremists', the CUB etc.), but the very intensity of industrial and social conflict was conducive to an escalation of violence. The trade unions and Communist Party were accused of promoting illegality by harbouring its perpetrators. For conservative forces, it was from the social movements themselves that society had to be saved. In the closing weeks of 1969 they made a concerted effort to lay the blame for society's ills on industrial militancy and social unrest. They prophesied that worse was to come if action was not taken, and called for 'firm steps' to re-establish law and order. In the words of a senior official of the Ministry of the Interior, reported by Panorama in July 1969:

> 'It would be enough at this time if during a demonstration some policeman was killed and if some fire-arm appeared among the demonstrators. The situation could precipitate in a matter of hours. It would be up to the government and the head of state to declare a state of emergency. That's just what has happened, in point of fact, in some American federal states over the past months.'(64)

The first demonstration involving violent clashes between police and demonstrators was held on November 6th, in Corso Sempione in Milan, in protest against the RAI TV and radio reporting of industrial conflict. Placards were carried saying: 'RAI - the bosses' voice'. A union leaflet called for the checking by union leaders of all transmissions concerning labour relations, and weekly programmes dealing with labour conditions. Several workers from large engineering works were arrested and imprisoned, provoking pickets of solidarity from their factories outside the prefecture of police. L'Unità reported that the following day the unions held meetings in all the factories and demanded the disarming of the police. The police were judged to be the guilty party. For the Corriere della Sera, by contrast, the fault lay with a 'fanatical minority extraneous to the workers' movement' which was responsible for the 'new explosion of violence'.(65) The second demonstration took place on November 18th; Via Larga turned into a battle-ground between police and demonstrators in the wake of a national general strike for housing reforms. In the turmoil a young policeman from the South, Antonio Annarumma, was killed. L'Unità again blamed the police. 'The responsibility for the incident lies entirely with the police authorities'; the crowd was described as 'serious, composed and responsible', whilst the police were 'savage' ('enferociti').(66) It reported similar reactions in the factories; at Sit Siemens 7,000 were said to have voted for the resignation of the Minister of the Interior, the release of all the arrested and a total ban on police presence at demonstrations.(67)

Annarumma's death provided conservative forces with the opportunity to mobilise the 'silent majority'. The Corriere della Sera reported that his funeral was attended by 30-50,000 people and that Milan shops pulled down their shutters. Its headline on November 20th read: 'A young man has died for our liberty'. On the following day, at a public meeting on law and order in Rome, the Prime Minister, Rumor, was reported as saying; 'Liberty is our most precious asset ('bene') and we must defend it day by day'.(68) In the populist discourse of the Right, the Southern and humble origins of the dead policeman were counterposed to the comfortable middle class background of the student agitators (the 'figli di papa') held responsible for the violence. The Corriere della Sera spoke of the crowd of 'extremists, Marxist-Leninists, pro-Chinese elements, youth of the Student Movement, extremist fringes and guerrillas'; for Il Giorno it was composed of: 'students, anarchists and ML'; La Notte blamed: 'Chinese and a yelling mass'.(69) Such labels had been the stock in trade of the conservative press for a couple of years, but they proliferated in the wake of Annarumma's death.

Although L'Unità did not report any instances when workers had used violence in the pursuit of the contract struggles, there can be little doubt that many confrontations involved the hurling of ball-bearings, the wielding of batons and banners and the flinging of punches. The paper Lotta Continua reported that during the clashes of Via Larga:

> 'groups of workers assaulted jeeps, collecting material ammunition from a nearby building site ... the police were visibly terrorised.'(70)

Political groups such as Lotta Continua actively propagated the use of 'offensive violence'. Attacks on property were common. Some of these were the result of planned, secret actions, such as the burning of the Pirelli tyres, but the use of physical coercion mostly consisted of what Bocca referred to as 'reformist violence'; by this he meant actions like picketing, which were 'mass backed and whose objectives were greater dignity and democracy, not the overthrow of the system'.(71)

However, there were forces interested in using the incidents of violence to present a picture of social chaos and political crisis. The Confindustria stated that:

> 'workers' power is tending to replace parliament and to establish a direct relationship with executive power. This subverts the political system in all respects.'(72)

Giorgio Bocca noted:

> 'Already there are those who want to make use of the violent incidents and subversion to invite repression. Let us not think of mysterious, unmentionable accords between 'the worse the better' philosophy of the Left and that of the Right; nor of the actions of <u>provocateurs</u>; look rather at the facility with which certain acts of vandalism have been able to take place in well-stocked factories, suggesting that they were not so displeasing to the owners.'(73)

But while for the movement the adoption of violence was mainly expressive and a relatively minor aspect of a wider

struggle, during and before the Hot Autumn clandestine operations by groupings of the extreme Right aimed at the strategic use of violence to provoke a backlash against that movement. Some 96 openly fascist attacks on Left wing HQ's took place between early January and December 12th 1969, but another 50 bomb attacks carried Left wing 'signatures', usually claiming to be anarchist-inspired. On April 24th bombs were planted at the Milan Trade Fair and the Central Station - targets which, it seemed, were chosen by enemies of capitalist property. This was the assumption made by the police who duly arrested known anarchist activists.(74)

This strategy of terror, which came to be known as the 'strategy of tension', was not much noted during the Hot Autumn, although people like Bocca suspected danger. It took the bomb-blast at the Bank of Agriculture in Piazza Fontana on December 12th to bring it to people's attention. Twelve people were reported dead in what was quickly defined by the police authorities, and then in the national press, as an anarchist-style bombing. The bombing, which occurred four days after the signing of the State sector engineering contract and at a time when strikes against the private sector were escalating, could only be interpreted as political. The Corriere della Sera, following police statements, blamed anarchists. The edition of December 17th carried a picture of Pietro Valpreda, one of those arrested, giving a clenched-fist salute. The caption underneath was: 'The

propaganda of terror'. The Corriere reported:

> 'The authorities have a precise and concrete idea of the background in which the ferocious plan of destruction was conceived ... The crime found its opening and breeding-ground in the anarchist and anarchaid groups where hatred and subversion are preached.'(75)

The article then outlined the personal inadequacies of the 'ballet-dancer' which were said to explain his 'irrational hatred for the whole of humanity'. Valpreda was made to represent the 'face of the criminal' in which readers could see the motivations of the terrorist, and the result of two years of social upheaval.

In the immediate aftermath of the bombing the Corriere della Sera wrote:

> 'We are living through the total dissolution of the principles of human society which democracy cannot survive; we are living through a savage challenge to, in one word, civilisation ... Democracy must defend itself.'(76)

In an edition at the end of the month following the funeral attended by some 300,000 people, it was more optimistic:

> '1969 opened with a thuggish and fascist-style attack in the name of an irrational and sometimes lunatic denunciation of consumer society ... It was the type of anarchist and nihilist rebellion manipulated by the PCI ... Today, the year comes to an end in a quite different atmosphere - an atmosphere dominated by sadness for the deaths of Piazza Fontana ... The fundamental values of the 'human pact' are getting strong again.'(77)

The consensus which the Corriere della Sera claimed to see emerging from the ashes of Piazza Fontana was, however, largely illusory. The rifts that had developed between social groups and classes in 1968-9 were refracted through their different assessments of the tragedy. The polarisations in relation to previous clashes between police demonstrators were reproduced. L'Unità was careful not to commit itself fully to defending the accused for fear of tarnishing its respectability, but nonetheless compared the bombing to the Reichstag fire which the Nazis had deliberately used to scapegoat anarchists.(78) In the factories there was widespread scepticism about the official version of events. There was some confusion as to the responsibility for the bombing, but 'it was widely understood to be an attempt to put a break on the workers' movement which was in a period of growth'.(79)

Far from bringing Italians together to defend 'their' State against its internal enemies, the bombing sowed new seeds of dissent. Giuseppe Pinelli, who fell to his death from a window of the police headquarters, became a martyr, and Valpreda became an Italian Dreyfus - the innocent victim of raison d'état. A campaign of counter-information linked the bombing to fascist conspirators with friends within the State apparatuses. Distrust of the State grew rather than diminished. Audiences of the film Un Cittadino Sopra Ogni Sospetto (A Citizen Above Suspicion), which was in the cinemas in 1970, could readily recognise the police chief who was given the job of investigating his own crimes. It

was an audience familiar with the notion that the plots of public life were stranger than fiction.

The campaign, headed by the Corriere della Sera, to discredit the social movements was, therefore, largely counter-productive. The movements over the following years were able to draw on the cultural legacy of anti-fascism to outflank such attempts at criminalisation. In a longer term perspective, it might be possible to show that the criminalisation strategy of the early 1970's laid the foundations for its more comprehensive and successful implementation at the end of the decade.(80) However, analyses like those of the extreme Left at the time, which focused only on the repressive strategies of the State, fail to see how by winning so many of its objectives, the workers' movement established a new relationship with both State and employers. The State was not merely a repressive machine, but the means whereby contracts in society were drawn up.

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 19

1. L'Unità (21-8-69).

2. Corriere della Sera (24-10-69).

3. L'Unità (3-10-69); Corriere della Sera (13-10-69).

4. L'Unità (11-10-69).

5. Corriere della Sera (25-10-69).

6. Vito Basilico, 'Pirelli', p. 288.

7. S. Datola, 'L'industria metalmeccanica milanese: 1945-75', in G. Bonvini, 'Un minuto più dal padrone' (Milan, 1977); G. Beccalli, 'Scioperi e organizzazione sindacale a Milano', pp. 101-105.

8. A. Sandretti, Lotte all'Alfa Romeo, Appendix XIII-XV; and pp. 31-2.

9. Rina Barbieri interview.

10. L'Unità (26-7-69)

11. Marino Regini and Emilio Reyneri, Lotte operaie e organizzazione del lavoro, pp. 74-5.

12. For example, the excellent studies carried out by Alessandro Pizzorno's team of researchers sacrifice the richness and diversity of the material they gathered in the interests of fitting evidence into certain categories of variables (e.g. the cultural dimensions of working class life at work, and outside, are squeezed into a box labelled 'class composition', analysed in terms of skill, work situation, age, region of origin and education; see A. Pizzorno, Introduction, Lotte Operaie e sindacato, Vol. 1, pp. 10-11). The project cannot be criticised for doing what it set out to do, but it is worth saying that the work of social historians shows the importance of critical and evaluative use of materials in ways which do not aspire to limiting notions of scientificity. The construction of any set of categories with which to analyse and describe in a 'neutral' manner involves, sacrificing some of the richness of the 'natural language' from which they have to be artificially derived. This means that it is always necessary to return to the words used by protagonists to understand what Pizzorno sets out as

his object/subject of study - the 'self-consciousness of the collective subject in formation' (l'autocoscienza del soggetto collettivo in formazione).

13. Dario Lanzardo, 'L'intervento socialista nella lotta operaia: l'inchiesta operaia di Marx' in Quaderni Rossi, 5, (Milan 1972 - reprint).

14. CUB Borletti, Inchiesta sulle condizioni di vita delle operaie alla Borletti, in I CUB: 3 anni di lotte (Milan, 1972), pp. 219-231.

15. Ibid.,

16. Rina Barbieri interview. Furthermore, wage parity did not include piece-rates; at Borletti men got 115 lire, whilst women got 72 lire for the same work; La Sinistra (13-1-68).

17. 'Spontanee riflessioni di una operaia'. Leaflet (undated).

18. Rina Barbieri interview.

19. L'Unità (1-5-69).

20. For criticism of unions' attitude to women workers, Nella Marcellino, 'La partecipazione femminile e il movimento sindacale', in Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale, May-August 1975, pp. 113-125; Maria Vittoria Ballestrero, Dalla tutela alla parità (Bologna, 1979), pp. 129-174.

21. Guido Viale, S'avanza un strano soldato (Rome, 1973), pp. 59-67.

22. L'Unita (15-5-69)

23. A. Marchetti, 'Un teatro troppo serio'.

24. Nanni Balestrini, La violenza illustrata (Turin, 1976), pp. 130-131.

25. A. Marchetti, 'Un teatro troppo serio'; (forthcoming in Classe); it was this aspect of workers' opposition to society which inspired Dario Fo; he recalled an incident in Milan when workers organised a funeral cortège with a black carriage, drawn by black horses wearing feathers and with themselves as mourners. Their factory was threatened with closure, and to draw attention to their case (but leaving passers-by to make apposite inquiries) they set about burying the corpse in good time. A fine sense of theatre! See 'Dario Fo à Vincennes', pp. 24-25.

26. There was perhaps a time when these events were ideal moments for romantic encounters.

27. A typed sheet without dates or instructions (in the private collection of a Sit Siemens factory delegate).

28. Barrington Moore, Injustice, p. 22.

29. Corriere della Sera (29-11-69).

30. A. Marchetti, 'Un teatro troppo serio'.

31. Workers' organisations in the zones frequently pivoted around the large factories, which set the pace for the smaller ones. Following 1969 there were battles by the latter to win parity with the former. This process tended to unify the movement, but was considerably strengthened by the fact that in 1969 workers and delegates went from factory to factory as never before. The guards could only shrug their shoulders.

32. L'Unità (11-12-69).

33. B. Beccalli, 'Scioperi e organizzazione sindacale', p. 95.

34. M. Benetti and M. Regini, Considerazioni generali sui vincoli posti dalla forza-lavoro occupata alla sua utilizzazione nell'azienda', in P. Alessandrini, Conflittualità e aspetti normativi del lavoro, pp. 28-9.

35. Carter Goodrich wrote a book, which has become a classic study in the field of industrial relations, on the basis of observations made inside British engineering factories in the years immediately after World War I. (C. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control (London 1975)). The time-lag between the British and Italian experience in this respect has provoked considerable speculation; see A. Pizzorno, 'Fra azione di classe e sistema corporativi', p. 940-986.

36. The 'war' metaphor was not new. Engels, for example, greatly admired Clausewitz. Gramsci's writings are full of references to strategies of class warfare in terms borrowed from military manuals; see A. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, pp. 238-239.
However, themes of class war re-entered political discussion in a major way in 1968-9. Both the 'spontaneous' and 'scientific' forms of 'proletarian violence' had their advocates and theorists, see Part 5, Chapter 23, pp. 503-507.

37. Rule-breaking, as Piven and Cloward note, is a key feature of social movements. Poor people can only win concessions by not playing to rules weighted against them. However, every type of conflict is necessarily regulated to some degree. So, for example, during strikes in 1969 workers threw ball-bearings not hand-grenades, No managers were killed; see Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Rules of Violence', in Revolutionaries 'New York, 1973).

38. CUB Borletti, Leaflet dated 20th October, 1969.

39. Rina Barbieri interview.

40. At the Sit Siemens there was considerable experimentation, see I. Regalia, Lotte operaie, Vol. 4, p. 70.

41. Rina Barbieri interview.

42. L'Unità (14-11-69).

43. Il Giorno (7-10-69). The article carried the sub-heading: 'The unions very hard task of convincing the grass-roots that a guilty capitalism cannot be immediately and heavily punished if disaster is to be avoided'.

44. However, most of the violence in 1969 was 'spontaneous'. That is to say, that it was not premeditated and carefully organised. Nevertheless, it followed certain patterns; for example, if the honour of one of the parties was called in question ('you're the son of a whore. Perhaps your mother really does walk the streets?'), and it had to be vindicated. See Domenico Norcia, 'Io garantito', quoted in L'Espresso, December 1981.

45. Gruppo di studio operaio impiegati, leaflet dated 30th October, 1969.

46. Michèle Perrot, Ouvriers en grève (France, 1871-1890) quoted by Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France, p. 337.

47. Workers enjoyed a good laugh at management's expense by reading their 'human relations' manuals; see Part 2, Chapter 5, footnote 32. p. 112.

48. 'It is the fourth time that IBM ... buries a man who refuses to be an instrument of production but wants to use his mind to the full ... It is a question of fighting the arbitrary powers of the few who hold the destiny of millions in their hands'; leaflet entitled: 'IBM democracy has struck again', signed Gruppo dei lavoratori IBM, 19th September, 1969.

49. Marino Regini, 'Come e perchè cambiano la logica dell'organizzazione sindacale e i compartamenti della base' in A. Pizzorno, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol 6, pp. 168-175.

50. I. Regalia, 'Le assemblee', in Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale, 56-57, September-December, 1975, pp. 103-106.

51. Ibid., pp. 106-110.

52. Rina Barbieri interview.

53. Max Weber distinguishes between three types of legitimation of authority in leadership - 'traditional', 'charismatic' and 'legal'; see 'Politics as a Vocation', in Alessandro Pizzorno (Ed.), Political Sociology (London, 1971), pp. 27-38.

54. Oral testimonies frequently show this. In my researches I found an extreme reluctance to speak about the personal side of how the movement was lived. This self-effacement points to a collective attitude rather than to modesty.

55. Ida Regalia, 'Rappresentanza operaia e sindacato', in A. Pizzorno, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 6, pp. 206-211.

56. See Part 5, Chapter 25, pp. 562-563.

57. Interestingly, selections of Gramsci's writings on the factory council movement were published in pamphlet form whereas they had previously been enclosed within large volumes.

58. Lucio Magri, 'Via italiana e strategia consiliore' in Il Manifesto, 2, 1974, also Grant Amyot, The Italian Communist Party (London, 1981), pp. 170-193.

59. It is worth noting that the struggle for dignity was closely bound up with work - with being a worker and not a parasite - even when the values of the work ethic were being questioned; see Aris Accornero, Il lavoro come ideologia (Bologna, 1980), pp. 49-89. But importantly this work was a means of socialising and not just earning money. The factory could be a prison but it could also be a play-ground; for an account of women who saw work in this double aspect, see M. Boneschi, Donne in liquidazione: Unidal (Milan, 1978).

60. See Adriano Sofri's critique of the attempt to revive the Ordine Nuovo communism of producers, 'Sur les conseils de délégués', in Les Temps Modernes, June 1974. His arguments are taken up in Andre Garz, Farewell to the Working Class (London, 1980), pp. 45-53.

61. This 'operaist' vision was most entrenched in the extreme Left, and in the industrial cities like Turin and Milan. It was also shared by currents within the Communist Party and by PSIUP, though from very different view-points, as the analysis of the Pirelli struggles has shown.

62. This point is discussed more fully in Part 5, Chapter 25.

63. For an approach to how a 'moral panic' is transformed into a 'general panic' (or crisis of hegemony), see Stuart Hall, Policing the Crisis (London, 1978), pp. 219-227.

64. Quoted in La Strage di Stato-controinchiesta (Rome, 1970) p. 105.

65. L'Unità (7-11-69); Corriere della Sera (7-11-69).

66. L'Unità (20-11-69).

67. L'Unità (21-11-69).

68. Corriere della Sera (22-11-69).

69. See P. Violi, I giornali dell'estrema sinistra, pp. 173-174.

70. Ibid., pp. 173-174.

71. Il Giorno (7-10-69).

72. La Strage di Stato- controinchiesta, p. 19.

73. Il Giorno (7-10-69)

74. La Strage di stato, pp. 30-35.

75. Corriere della Sera (17-12-69).

76. Corriere della Sera (13-12-69).

77. Corriere della Sera (28-12-69).

78. L'Unità (20-12-69).

79. Nina Barbieri interview; Licia Pinelli gives a less sanguine account of the confusion on the Left, much of which was prepared to accept that anarchists might have been responsible; Piero Scaramucci, Licia Pinelli, p. 18.

80. The trials and re-trials of Pietro Valpreda tell the story of how responsibility for the Piazza Fontana bombing has been allocated according to the political situation in which they have taken place. The theory of the 'convergence of the two extremes' (i.e. extreme Right and extreme Left), which explains how fascists and anarchists can collaborate in terrorist enterprises, has continued to have its advocates. However, there are dangers in attributing grand designs and strategies to 'rulers' who in fact stumble and improvise their way through history. It would be more fruitful to look at how government helped produce 'criminals' (red terrorists, for example) by putting State activities beyond the control of the law; see Part 5, Chapter 23, pp. 296-298.

Foucault usefully criticises the concept of repression which underlies many analyses:

> 'If power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it? What gives power its hold ... is quite simply the fact ... it runs through and produces things, it induces pleasure, it forms knowledge, it produces discourse';
>
> M. Foucault, 'Truth and Power', p. 36.

CHAPTER 20: THE RENEWAL OF THE UNIONS AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

During the Hot Autumn a workers' movement developed, especially in the engineering industry, which was very different from the official Workers' Movement ('Movimento Operaio') with capital letters. Its priorities were not so much the building of organisations with formal memberships and the winning of union recognition, as winning freedoms and power in the workplace through organised disruption. It created its own demands, forms of action and organisation from below. The unions tended to follow the movement and not vice versa; this was referred to at the time as 'riding the tiger'. Nonetheless, the unions did risk the ride and in important respects set objectives and guided the movement. In contrast to the behaviour of the French CGT in the wake of the May events in France, the Italian CGIL and other unions did not try to stem the development of the movement (perhaps in the circumstances of a year and a half of radicalisation it would not have been feasible anyway). Instead, they opened themselves to criticisms and reappraisals in the light of events like those at Fiat. In fact, during the Hot Autumn the unions recouped some of the prestige they had lost in previous months. This enabled them to monopolise negotiations over the contracts and to re-establish control over shopfloor organisation. The subject of this chapter is the process whereby the unions used the movement to gain not only a favourable agreement but recognition at both national and local levels.

Renewal of the Unions

The events at Fiat immediately preceding the Hot Autumn marked the nadir of Italian unionism in 1968-9. The movement was not only autonomous of the unions, but hostile to them. Their failure to represent the rank-and-file had many causes which were by no means exclusive to the Turinese situation; unions were identified with particular political parties and their rivalries. Above all, they seemed to have little to do with the everyday problems of the shopfloor, where they were weakly organised and ineffectual. This situation was one of a 'structural crisis' of representation; the unions nationally and locally tended to represent the interests of the better organised, skilled members more than those of the un- and semi-skilled. In the Hot Autumn, the unions aspired to overcome this crisis.

Since 1948, when groups of workers broke away from the CGIL to form rival unions, the unions had become closely associated with political parties. The CGIL was dominated by the PCI and PSI, and its officials held high party posts, and seats in Parliament; the predominantly Catholic CISL had close links with the Church and Christian Democratic Party; and the UIL had connections with the Republicans and Social Democrats. However, in 1969 the situation began to change dramatically. In the congresses of June-July 1969, ACLI, the influential association of Catholic workers, decided to end its special relationship with the Christian Democrats; the CGIL decided to separate party and union functions, which were thenceforth defined as 'incompatible';

while the CISL was divided, with the industrial delegates most involved in the contract disputes favouring hard line opposition to the government. The tide of votes in favour of a trade unionism freed of party constraints opened the prospect of reunifying the Confederations.

This idea was strongest in the engineering sections, which were especially interested in being free of pressures from both the Confederations and the parties. (In Turin, the FIOM-CGIL was especially open to these ideas. In Milan, where the FIOM was more tightly controlled by older PCI members, it was the FIM-CISL that was the more radical.) An article in Dibattito Sindacale, the journal of the Milanese FIM, of the previous year stressed the need for a positive interpretation of the 'incompatibility' notion. It claimed to identify a new orientation to the union among workers:

> 'Joining the union is less than ever a reflection of an ideological and party choice, and increasingly activists and members find their means of participating in society through the union ... The workers are deserting the branches and cells of the parties, because they see that they count for nothing in them.'(1)

A questionnaire of the membership in February 1969 found that 72% thought that the union should take on issues usually dealt with by the parties.(2)

The case of the Milanese FIM is an especially interesting example of union renewal; at the time, it was referred to as exemplary. Although it was half the size of the FIOM in the province, it almost doubled its membership in 1967-70, and showed itself open and responsive to the social movements.(3)

The dramatic radicalisation within the 'Catholic world' found expression and a focus for commitment within the union. There was a shared rejection of the Christian Democratic Party and of a Catholicism which supported the status quo in society. In a speech to the ACLI conference of Milan province in July 1968 (which, according to Rinascità, represented an 'imposing mass organisation of some 45-50,000 members, mostly manual workers'), Bruno Manghi referred to the 'strong spiritual force' within the ACLI. This was expressed through denunciations of 'intolerable working conditions ... and of the oppression of the personality and humanity of the worker'. Rinascità noted:

> 'no shortage of moral condemnations of those Catholics who are the first to contribute to charity, and yet are hateful exploiters of men in the factories'.(4)

The FIM-CISL, like other sectors of Italian unions, was overtaken by the social movements, but it was quick to adapt to the new climate. There was a desire to get away from the compromises of the past, and to create a new identity for the union. But the legacy of Catholic unionism provided raw materials for this change of direction. For example, the FIM's antipathy to 'ideology', previously bound-up with anti-communism, was developed into a radical pragmatism, which readily borrowed from the student movement and learnt from grass-roots opinion. The Catholic humanism of the FIM-CISL opened the way to critiques of the Taylorist organisation of work. The pages of Dibattito Sindacale in

1968-9 are alive with discussions involving a fundamental rethinking of a tradition.(5) Especially active participants were Milanese Catholic intellectuals, who were engaged in teaching at the Catholic University, and in editing the review Collegamenti. Yet non-Catholics were also drawn into the ambiance of the FIM, which became a melting pot for ideas coming from the New Left. It became a cultural bridge-head between sections of the Milanese intelligensia and workers in the factories.(6)

The FIM was capable of rising quickly to the challenge presented by the social movements because of its cultural openess. The early editions of Dibattito Sindacale continuously reiterate the theme of 'rebirth' and 'renewal'; for example, Giorgio Tiboni, a member of the secretariat, wrote: 'The union was born in the factory and it is to the factory that it must return';(7) Bruno Manghi referred to 'spontaneous worker protest' as the 'nodal point for any attempt to construct a new union'. 'The union', he wrote:

> 'has to carry spontaneous actions into the organisation ... in the sense that it must accept its criticism ... it must discover within itself the 'wildcat' attitude to negotiation.'(8)

The FIM followed this approach by adopting the demand for egalitarian lump sum wage increases, despite the resistance of the CISL confederation and of other unions. Similarly, it took up the calls for parity with white collar workers, and for the reduction of the number of grades. The election of the first delegates was greeted as the sign of a new democracy in the workplace.

The flexibility of the FIM on these issues was partly the result of its traditional rivalry with the FIOM, and this, in turn, was related to differences in their constituencies. The FIOM had a much more clearly defined identity and tradition. This was largely due to its core membership of skilled workers with strong ties with the Left parties. In 1968-9, the FIOM in Milan, and nationally, opposed egalitarian demands, such as those on wages and grades, in that they were thought to undermine differentials based on skill ('professionalità').(9) The defence of skill was seen as part of the struggle against the imposition of job evaluation, and full capitalist control of the system of pay and promotion. Moreover, the FIOM had a greater stake in the existing structures of workers' representation, especially in the Internal Commissions, and set a premium on leadership and discipline. Throughout the Hot Autumn, the union hierarchy, though not the ordinary members, supported the renewal of this Internal Commission, and opposed their replacement by new delegate representation.(10) The FIM, on the other hand, drew its membership mainly from groups of semi- and unskilled workers and clerical workers, who had had little to do with union organisation, let alone political parties. In promoting the struggles of these 'outsiders', the FIM had little to lose and a lot to gain in organisational strength and influence. It was strategically well-placed to take advantage of the structural crisis of representation which overtook the unions in late 1968-early 1969. The membership of the FIM had no interest in defending the hierarchies of pay and grading, and, therefore, shared

unambiguously in the egalitarian spirit of the movement. The union's publications openly championed the most radical demands, and even went as far as printing documents of Potere Operaio and the CUB, which actually attacked the unions.(11) In Dibattito Sindacale, the FIM intellectuals mounted systematic critiques of the notion of skill ('professionalità'), and theorised the role of the 'operaio comune' as the spearhead of the attack on the Taylorist organisation of work. They wrote of grading, differentials and piece-rates as managerial instruments of social control. The FIM thereby made itself an interpretor of the newest and most radical struggles along the 'frontier of control'.(12)

The Milanese FIM represented a limit-case of union renewal. Union activism involved immense investments of energy and intensive debate, not only in the workplace, but at summer camps. The technical-professional training of militants and officials came second to their theoretical-cultural preparation. Dreams of revolution and a new society were glimpsed in the themes of 'self-management' ('autogestione'), 'autonomous culture' and 'workers' creativity', which recurred in FIM literature.(13) Not surprisingly, it was labelled 'pan-sindicalist' and 'anarcho-sindicalist'. However, many of the FIM's proposals were subsequently taken up by the FIOM and by the Confederations under the pressure of the rank-and-file. All the unions stood to gain from the radicalisation of the industrial action.

The unions as a whole had an organisational interest in entering the factories from which they had been effectively

excluded since 1948. The movement provided the means of entry, and strengthened the hand of Left wing currents within the FIOM and CGIL. At the national congress of the CGIL in 1969, delegates heaped criticism on the leadership for what Rinaldo Scheda called

> 'the error of entrenching themselves against spontaneism ... episodes like the CUB are in the first place a severe criticism of our own deficiencies.'(14)

Vittoria Foa, the PSIUP member of the CGIL secretariat, insisted on the centrality of the question of 'workers' control':

> 'a wage gain, even though it is considerable, is subject to the exigencies of profit from the very start, unless it is accompanied by elements of control over the use of labour'.(15)

Yet it took longer than the Hot Autumn for the union confederations to come to terms with the transformations of the structures of representation in the factories.

However, throughout this period, the unions gave a free rein to the movement and won back their leadership role by democratising the running of the strikes. Although workers' sense of identification with the unions was marginal to the feeling of being a part of a movement, nonetheless the legitimacy of the unions' leadership was never seriously put in doubt. The almost unanimous vote in favour of the unions' final recommendation of acceptance of the contract offers in December 1969 and January 1970, was also a vote of confidence in their leadership. The increase in unionisation,

which in the province of Milan rose from 30% to 44% of the workforce in 1968-70, was a sign of greater interest in and identification with the unions.(16)

New Rules of the Game

On January 9th 1970 L'Unità reported that Costa, president of the Confindustria, had called for

> 'the restoration of normality in the workplaces and the infliction of penalties on those found guilty of crimes carried out in the contract dispute of the previous year.'(17)

The same day some 500 cases were due to be heard in Milan. According to the Chamber of Labour ('Camera del Lavoro'), about 8,000 workers had been charged over the previous 3 years in connection with industrial disputes. What exactly constituted 'normality' was open to interpretation. 'Normality' can only be said to exist on the basis of a broad consensus, or, at least, a general acquiescence concerning the regulation of conflict. The social movements of 1968-9 had destroyed that consensus, and interrupted the normal channels of negotiation. The Internal Commissions were no longer accepted by workers as their sole representatives in the factory, nor was the authority of the foreman greatly respected. The predilection for checker-board strikes and direct action had unhinged daily subjection to the machinery and dictates of rational planning. Ideas circulated within the movements according to which 'normality' was 'inhuman' and 'unjust'.

The restoration of the status quo, understood as the management's right to manage without reference to the workforce, was not realistic, unless 'normality', understood as parliamentary democracy, was replaced by some Greek-style military régime. This option was not entirely discounted, as evidenced by the launching of the 'strategy of tension'. However, it was a bloody and dangerous course of action, which had little appeal for the dominant multinational groups. The report of the Pirelli Commission on changes in the Confindustria, which was initiated in March 1969 and completed in January 1970, welcomed the new spirit of pluralism and modernisation within Italian society:

> 'To pretend that tensions do not exist, or, worse, to know of their existence and to try to suppress them, entails taking a step towards the removal of fundamental freedoms. Order is not the suppression of tensions, even though acute, or of legal battles fought in the open ('alla luce del sole'); order is the observation of the rules of civil society.'(18)

The principal problem, therefore, was the construction of new rules and norms. The 'explosion of tensions' in the previous months, resulting from 'accumulated social, territorial and sectoral disequilibria', were 'not a reason for industrialists to refuse to recognise the social and political function of responsible and efficient unions'.(19)

The search for formulas for social equilibrium was at the top of the agendas of both the government and the Confindustria. There was an awareness that the status quo could not be restored, but also a desire to put an end to

the social movements. The continuous reiteration of the theme of law and order, which reached a crescendo in the wake of the Piazza Fontana bombings, ran through all the talk of change and reform. Above all, the Hot Autumn and other struggles were defined as an exceptional moment to be bracketed off and superceded. This was the case in the pronouncements of the Corriere della Sera, in which the events were treated as a form of temporary national derangement, and in the Pirelli report, in which they figured as manifestations of Italian backwardness and uneven development on the road to modern pluralism. The strategies evolved to deal with the movements, therefore, invoked measures of discipline and coercion, as well as concessions.

A consideration of the engineering contracts and of the labour legislation, which was passed at the end of the Hot Autumn, provides a way of looking at the attempt to construct a new set of rules in industrial relations as part of wider capitalist strategies for bringing the social movements to heel. At the same time, it is necessary to examine the dynamics of the workers' movement itself in relation to the concessions and reforms. Given that they could not be coerced, workers had to be persuaded to abide by new rules.

The Contracts

The engineering contracts were signed on December 9th between the unions and the Intersind, and on December 21st

between the unions and the Confindustria. The union platform of demands was largely accepted. The wage increase, which was the same for all, was considerable; it outstripped price rises so that workers were able to buy consumer durables previously made for middle class or foreign purchasers. Moreover, the share of the National Income going to wage workers increased, while the proportion going in profits declined.(20) Hours were to be reduced to 40 a week over a 3 year period, and contractual limits were placed on overtime working. The principle of parity between manual and white collar workers was recognised, along with an agreement to implement it by stages, starting with sickness benefits. It gave unions the right to hold ten meetings in the workplace, in work time, over the period of a year. In addition the unions were to have official noticeboards and the right to issue information.(21)

The new contract was greeted as a major victory for the workers, and as a blow for the employers. Most commentators were agreed on this. However, its effects on the social movement, which had seen a good contract as a common goal likely to benefit all workers, were complex. The signing of the agreements undermined and contained mobilisation. A three yearly contest was finished and it was time to recuperate the wages lost through stoppages. The groups of the extreme Left, for example, argued against acceptance of the agreement, not because they thought it a bad one, but because they knew it would reduce the chances of a political show-down.(22) Yet the contract had been wrested from the employers. It had been taken, not given.

The timing of the concessions related to the degree of pressure and disruption brought by the movement. It was clear that the government had all but forced the private sector to give way. There was no question of gratitude, or of concern for the financial situation of the companies. Rather, the lengthy dispute left a legacy of bitterness and recrimination. In January 1970 charges rained down on the heads of workers, whilst the unions published a report ('libro bianco') outlining cases of management repression in the factories, and organised defence campaigns.

The contract concessions did terminate a particular phase of the movement, but had nothing like the demobilising effects of the Grenelle agreements in France following the 1968 general strike. Firstly, workers fought to implement the contract at a local level. At Fiat they immediately started working a 42 hour week, thereby speeding up the implementation of the agreement. Secondly, the movement on the shopfloor continued to press for the abolition of piece-work, for mass regrading, for plant-level wage increases and for the recognition of delegates - none of which had been subject to negotiation in the contract. The contract victory, in other words, proved that collective action was the most effective way of achieving both the material gains and decision-making powers from which workers had been so long excluded. The gains made through the struggles of the Hot Autumn were the gains of the social movements in that it was the surge of rebellion from below that forced the Intersind and Confindustria to concede so generously.

However, as has been seen, the unions won back influence during the Hot Autumn, and sealed it with the renewal of the contract. Although there were enormous disparities between the demands, forms of action and organisation of the movement and those promoted by the national unions, the contract opened the way for the unions to regulate, and then incorporate, the informal structures of representation created in the previous months. The recognition of the rights of unions (and no one else) to hold meetings was unwillingly conceded by the employers, but it was the necessary precondition to the establishment of defined procedures, lines of communication and set roles in which the union was management's sole interlocutor. The Labour Charter, which was voted through parliament on December 11th, 1969, that is exactly between the signing of the two contracts, made this aspect of the contract the founding principle of a reorganisation of the system of industrial relations in Italy.

The Labour Charter, the General Amnesty - the State and the Movement

In May 1970 the Labour Charter ('Statuto dei Lavoratori') became law and, furthermore, parliament gave a general amnesty to those charged with offences connected with labour disputes prior to passage of the new bill. These two measures were the most significant cases of action designed to favour the institutionalisation of protest.

The Labour Charter put into law certain rights concerning meetings, recruitment and union activity in general, which had been in the engineering workers' contract. In addition, it contained clauses which made it illegal for employers to discriminate in any way against workers engaged in union activity and banned company-unionism. Unfair dismissals now resulted in the reinstatement of the worker concerned. Basically, the law sanctioned the recognition of unions in workplaces, and aimed to eliminate repression and the unilateral rights of the employer. The new rights related directly to the conditions of work and union representation rather than to the position of the worker as an ordinary citizen in the factory, which was the case before.(23)

The Labour Charter was a historic piece of legislation. Not since the Constitution had there been such a wholesale redefinition of the rights of labour. Recourse to the magistracy had been the option chosen by employers determined to outlaw forms of strike action, and the law itself had been associated with the 'bosses'. The granting of the general amnesty wiped clean the slate, while the new law provided mechanisms for the redress of grievances which were tilted in favour of the employee.(24)

The legislation offered a means of bringing the social movement to an end. Firstly, it aimed to remove one of the causes of the workers' movement - namely, the exclusion of workers' organisations (and workers as individuals) from the benefits of citizenship. Secondly, it aimed to eliminate

conflict over fundamental issues (union recognition, above all), and to encourage recourse to the Law as the preferred means of resolving conflicts. Respect for the law would, in turn, it was hoped, reduce levels of conflict in society as a whole. The Labour Charter, in other words, was designed to prevent a repetition of the Hot Autumn.

The effects of the Labour Charter and amnesty on the social movements were, however, ambiguous and contradictory. It has been argued, for example, that the general amnesty gave de facto legitimation to the use of violence in industrial disputes by absolving the perpetrators of responsibility for their actions. This opened the way for unions and magistrates to interpret the Charter in ways which legitimated or depenalised violent actions.(25) The logic of this argument is that the liberalisation of the laws gave a licence to forces within society bent on subverting the rule of law rather than on resolving conflicts legally. But, even if it is accepted that the legislation was used in this way, to attribute responsibility for violence and terrorism in the factory to judicial leniency is misleading.

The question can be put in another way: what would have happened had there been no amnesty? The conflicts of 1968-9, as has been seen, revealed deep-seated and intense feelings of moral outrage on the part of literally millions of Italians. Recourse to violent methods pointed to the fact that people regarded 'legal methods' as inadequate for redressing grievances. It was employers, headmasters and others who had recourse to the law. Therefore,

for the State to have sanctioned thousands of trials on charges arising from the social conflicts would have been to risk turning the law-courts into the tribunals of popular agitators. The decision to hold an amnesty was a political decision to save the law from becoming too politicised.

The amnesty meant turning over a new page in the law to prevent the blots from previous pages coming through. One of the consequences was the use of 'reformist violence' (to use Bocca's words) was no longer sufficient grounds for employers to sack workers. The threshold of what was considered acceptable violence was lowered in response to changes in the balance of power inside the workplace, which, in turn, the Labour Charter underwrote.(26) But, without such measures, it would have been extremely difficult to have established new rules to regulate industrial conflicts since they would not have seemed impartial.

Piven and Cloward write that

> 'even when protestors succeed in forcing government to respond, they do not dictate the content of that response'.(27) (p. 32).

Concessions in themselves are not sufficient to undermine movements, sometimes they even show that protest works. But the concessions, in the examples studied by them, are usually part and parcel of a set of measures designed to reintegrate the movement into normal political channels.

When government grants the right to organise,

> 'to all appearances it simply acted to redress felt grievances ... yet in each case elites responded to discontent by proposing reforms with which they had experience and which consisted mainly in extending established procedures to new groups or to new institutional areas.'[28] (p. 32)

Their analysis usefully draws attention to the disparity between movement demands and state responses.

In the case of the Labour Charter, legislation was never demanded by the social movement. It was drafted by Communist and Socialist Party parliamentarians with the support of the unions, who used the leverage provided by the mass mobilisations to push through the bill. As far as movement activists were concerned, it was through direct action, not in the law courts, that real concessions were wrung from employers and the State. For them the threat of escalating the actions, not legal niceties, forced through the general amnesty. In Piven and Cloward's perspective, the Charter was an example of legislation designed to strengthen the hand of union organisers over the hot-heads of the movement. The problem, in this instance, is that the effects were more contradictory.

As Federico Mancini has noted, this was partly because of the amnesty. But, a distinction needs also to be made between reforms which facilitate and encourage mobilisation, and reforms which limit or block it.[29] The Labour Charter did not concede the right to unionise while simultaneously stipulating compulsory mediation, 'cooling-off' periods before

strikes and so on. On the contrary, it offered workers protection against sackings which meant that they could take industrial action without fear of management reprisals. (The advantages it gave to workers can be seen by contrasting the position of the 'garantiti' and the 'non-garantiti' - the 'protected' and the 'unprotected'.)(30) Militancy was incentivised, especially when it seemed the only way to win concessions. This was the case in the 1970's when Italian governments proved largely incapable of constructing social contracts in which workers gained benefits through State policies in return for their quiescence.

The Pirelli report recommended a package of measures, which included social reforms as well as legal protection. But, between 1969 and 1971, reforms totalled:

> 'a change in the pension system, a general and not particularly progressive new housing law, and certain promises about the health service'.(31)

The State's efforts to reform the health service were as lamentable as its attempts to reform the education system. The number of hospital beds per 1,000 of the population was the lowest in Western Europe, and the private insurance schemes, pharmaceutical industry and medical profession grew fat off the contributions deducted from wage packets. Giorgio Ruffolo describes the situation:

> 'The health sector is largely immersed in that vast parasitic area of Italian society that makes up the squalid hinterland of an unevenly industrialised economy; it is the area of rent, middle-men, speculation ... and clientelistic vegetation.'(32)

In the mid and late 1970's the trade unions were increasingly consulted by governments and were represented in local and national state institutions.(33) But, in the wake of the Hot Autumn, the failure to carry through social reforms from above created some of the conditions for popular mobilisations from below. The workers' movement extended its struggles beyond the factory to support tenants' mobilisations and campaigns of civil disobedience. The strategies of the political élites to reintegrate the movement into normal political channels did not succeed in creating an image of the State as powerful and paternalistic. The Italian state, unlike the American State of Piven and Cloward's case studies, was divided within itself and held in low esteem by its citizens.

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 20

1. Dibattito Sindacale, May-June 1968.

2. G. Sclavi, 'Due CISL', in Il Manifesto (October-November 1969).

3. Bianca Beccalli, 'Scioperi e organizzazione sindacale a Milano', p. 101.

4. Aldo Bonaccini, 'Il soffitto delle ACLI milanesi', in Finascitā (19-7-68), pp. 9-13.

5. The themes of issues give some idea of the range of discussion: workers' history, '68 and the student movement, union democracy.

6. A fair sprinkling of sociologists were among them.

7. Dibattito Sindacale, May-June 1968.

8. Dibattito Sindacale, March-April 1968.

9. M. Regini and E. Reyneri, Lotte operaie e organizzazione del lavoro, pp. 76-7, p. 95.

10. I. Regalia, 'Rappresentanza operaia e sindacato' in A. Pizzorno, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 6, pp. 199-206.

11. Dibattito Sindacale, September-October 1969.

12. Gian Primo Cella and Bruno Manghi, Un sindacato italiano negli anni sessanta, pp. 39-44.

13. The theme of 'autogestion' was imported enthusiastically from France where Catholic unionists were keen advocates. Ideas popularised by the May events were filtered through the C.F.D.T.; see Serge Mallet, Le pouvoir ouvrier (Paris, 1971).

14. Dibattito Sindacale, September-October 1969.

15. Ibid., p. 16.

16. B. Beccalli, 'Scioperi e organizzazione sindacale a Milano', p. 102.

17. L'Unità (14-1-70).
A union dossier claimed that 14,000 citizens had been charged for offences connected with industrial disputes during the autumn of 1969. 46% were brought by the police, but another 24% were brought by employers. L. Borgomeo and A. Forbice, 14,000 denunce. Chi, dove, come, perchè. (Rome, 1970), quoted by Sergio Turone, Storia del sindacato, pp. 408-409.

18. 'Relazione della 'Commissione Pirelli' sulla revisione di strutture della Confindustria', in Mondo Economico, 8, February 28th, 1970, p. 43.

19. Ibid., p. 51.

20. M. Salvati, Il sistema economico italiano, pp. 106-107.

21. V. Foa, Sindacati e lotte operaie, pp. 187-193.

22. For Lotta Continua, for example, the problem was how to 'generalise' the factory struggles; the unity of workers and students was conceived of as the first link in construction of a total social revolt. Only the unions got in the way; one Pirelli worker was reported as saying: 'The unions are worse than the bosses. The bosses give you a hard time and sometimes sack you, but the unions will be there in whatever factory you go to'; Lotta Continua (6-12-69).

23. V. Foa, Sindacati e lotte operaie, pp. 193-195.

24. Alberto Melucci lists four factors which inhibited union recourse to the law: 1) fear of adverse judgements; 2) distrust of the law and the State, especially among older unionists; 3) preference for local government mediation; 4) fear of exposure to bad publicity. With the implementation of the Labour Charter, judgements were decidedly more favourable in the industrialised North where the magistrates were more progressive and the unions were stronger; see A. Melucci, 'Vers une système de relations professionnelles en Italie', in 'Sociologie de travail', 1, 1976, pp. 385-400; see also Lo Statuto dei Lavoratori: Un bilancio politico (Bologna, 1977).

25. Federico Mancini, Terroristi e riformisti (Bologna, 1981) pp. 12-13.

26. Gaetano Insolera writes with reference to the social movements in Italy following 1968: 'These illegal practices ... have a specific theoretical foundation ... They have the power to decisively influence the concept of legality itself ... The institutions of political democracy, the system of rights, are not put in question; on the contrary, their maximum use allows claims to be made concerning the substantial legitimacy of prohibited forms of behaviour'; Gaetano Insolera, 'Criminalità politica e illegalita' in Luigi Manconi (Ed.), La Violenza e la politica (Rome, 1979), p. 35.

27. F. Piven and R. Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 32.

28. Ibid., p. 32.

29. The reforms carried out by the Centre Left government, for example, did virtually nothing to encourage mobilisations of the kind which had brought it to power. For a fascinating analysis of the discussion of reforms and their 'capitalist' or 'anti-capitalist' role, see Paul Ginsborg, 'The Nature of Reforms: Communist Party Strategy and the Agrarian Question in Southern Italy, 1943-48', in History Workshop Journal (forthcoming).

30. Unionised industrial workers in large concerns could use their 'muscle' and the skills of their negotiators to advantage. Those in workplaces with less than ten employees were not covered by the law. Given the 'dual' structure of the Italian economy and the conscious strategy of employers to reverse the effects of the Hot Autumn by de-centralising production and 'putting out' work, a large number of workers were protected neither by laws nor by unions. Women in particular were a key component of this workforce; in the mid '70's an estimated one million or more were home-workers in the textile and clothing sectors. In the second half of the 1970's this phenomenon (which was referred to as 'black work' - 'lavoro nero') revealed the divisions in terms of pay, conditions, job security, rights and so on which ran through the Italian working class. In these circumstances, the position of the young, of women and of Southerners, who were often marginally and precariously placed in the labour market, was very different to that of the workers who had been at the centre of the industrial unrest since 1968.

    See Massimo Paci, Mercato di lavoro e classi sociali in Italia, pp. 220-222.

31. Marino Regini, 'Labour Unions, Industrial Action and Politics', in Western European Politics, 2, October 1979, p. 58.

32. Giorgio Ruffolo, Riforme e controriforme, p. 22.

33. M. Regini, 'Stato e Sindacati nel Sistema Economico', in Giornale di Diritto del Lavoro e di Relazioni Industriali, 1, 1979, pp. 62-6.

CHAPTER 21: THE UNIONS AND THE MOVEMENT - INSTITUTIONALISATION FROM BELOW

The distinction between strategies and processes of institutionalisation 'from above' and 'from below' can be misleading. Firstly, because it suggests a topographical division that is too absolute. For example, the amnesty declared in 1970 was ultimately the result of a political decision taken by the government, but it was also a demand of the social movements, the trade unions and of the parties of the Left. Secondly, it suggests a certain coherence of planning or the unfolding of an inevitable logic whilst the confusion of events belies such an analysis. Nonetheless, the distinction can be useful if these things are borne in mind. As has been seen, there was no shortage of strategic thinking among the powerful, but it was incoherent and contradictory, ranging from strategies of tension to schemes for an orderly pluralism. By contrast, the unions were more coherent in setting about putting their house in order and in giving institutional shape to the magma of discontent.

Unions in the Workplace

During the Hot Autumn, the unions recuperated overall control of the strike movement, but this involved 'riding the tiger' (i.e. the movement). It was a movement characterised by non-negotiable demands, expressive forms of action and direct popular participation in decision-making - not the sort of behaviour designed to build union organisation.

However, in the post-contract period, some of the special conditions making such a movement possible were removed. The signing of the contracts for all the sectors ended the contract season - a key institutional condition for the generalised mobilisation. 1968-1969 was one of the exceptional moments when popular protest erupted into national politics. But expectations of radical change could not run high indefinitely. It was not only the ruling groups who defined the events as abnormal and exceptional, and therefore a 'passing phase'. The unions, too, were anxious that the mass movement should be channelled into the more stable and durable organisation needed for 'normal times'. They sought to make demands negotiable, to direct industrial action towards their attainment, and to standardise the structures of representation. In other words, union officials aimed to discipline the movement so that workers acted through the organisation which represented them, and not outside it.

The institutionalisation of the movement can be seen particularly clearly in relation to the reorganisation of representation. The first moment of the process was marked by the split of the new collective subject formed in the struggles into two components: the participators - the active minority with an interest in power, who tended to become representatives, and the non-participators, who tended to delegate responsibility.(1) One of the most dramatic instances of this occurred at Fiat in Turin, where the campaign of opposition to the formalisation of the

delegate's role was fought under the slogan 'we are all delegates'. Workers joined the unions and accepted the delegates en masse, despite their earlier refusal. Similarly, in Milan, at Alfa Romeo, Pirelli and Sit Siemens, where workers had shown considerable self-organisation, especially at shopfloor level, anti-union radicalism had few exponents. Lotta Continua, in particular, argued that the delegates were 'an instrument with which the unions impose their line and repress the vanguards', and that the union structure forced them into 'corporative and sectoral' struggles. It counterposed proletarian struggle and democracy to parliamentarism and phoney democracy.(2) However, such reasoning fell on stony ground.

The split between the delegates and the majority of workers was not sudden or absolute, unlike the breakdown in the relationship between Lotta Continua-style 'movementists' and the movement in the factories. Throughout 1970-1 levels of participation in meetings remained high, and decisions were taken often against the wishes of the union officials. Many aspects of the delegate structures, which were officially accepted as the basis for union reorganisation by the CGIL in December 1970, bore the imprint of the movement from below; for example, delegates were elected by all workers, they represented a 'homogeneous group' (e.g. the foundry), they were liable to recall and they were empowered to bargain at plant level. Indeed, it was only as a result of the movement's struggles that they first won recognition from management and came to replace the

Internal Commissions.[3] Management resistance was often fierce and workers had to continually fight for their rights. At Borletti recognition was not ceded until 1972, and when the delegates went en masse to negotiate they were regularly turned back.[4]

The tendency for the separation between the informal leaders, who emerged during the Hot Autumn, and the rank-and-file workers had numerous causes in the divisions within the working class. Surveys of factory representation in the province of Milan for 1970 and 1973 show that women and immigrant workers remained heavily under-represented, though younger workers and the semi-skilled were better represented.[5] Even when women were in the majority, they usually chose male workers to represent them. It was rare to see a woman's face in positions of authority. Only 6 of the 185 officials of the engineering unions in Lombardy were women.[6] The lack of representation did not, of course, result directly from the decline of the movement after 1969, but it was exacerbated by it. The participation of women workers in the industrial conflicts had specific characteristics. Ida Regalia has observed in relation to Sit Siemens in Milan:

> 'There seems to be a negative correlation between militancy and unionisation in the moments of fullest mobilisation; in this instance the women ... would be the most active (in the marches, pickets and demonstrations) and the most determined to adopt extreme forms of action. The women, typically, use lightning stoppages that are 'expressive', and their demands remain latent, or are ends in themselves (against the speed of the line, foremen and piece-work)'.[7]

In other words, women workers tended not to be regular members of the unions, but were often the most angry and intransigent during mobilisations. With the return to 'normality', the women workers tended once more to delegate decision-making to the male organisers.

The reasons for this 'unpredictable' behaviour are to be found in a long and complex history - a history which was largely hidden from view until it was brought to light by the feminist movement in the 1970's.(8) The burden of work in the home as well as outside, the high turnover in women's jobs and the dominance of the idea of the male family wage (all of which were taken for granted by the unions) - these were just some of the factors discouraging women's regular participation in the workers' movement. However, the great majority of shopfloor representatives saw women workers as emotional, untrustworthy and difficult. The problem, for them, appeared to be increasingly one of discipline and order rather than the furtherment of democratic participation.

This preoccupation was a general one of how to adapt the union to a less conflictual situation. Many leading activists became full-time union organisers after 1969, while in 1970 up to 50% of delegates resigned.(9) The unions did not invent the turn to organisation in the wake of the Hot Autumn. The revival of Leninism, to give another example, was but another symptom of a cultural shift away from ideologies of spontaneity and towards those of organisation.(10) It was a phase which saw 'organisers' give priority to organisational growth - a tendency which Piven and Cloward

have written of as:

> 'the presumption of most reformers and revolutionaries who have tried to organise the lower classes ... that once the economic and political resources of at least modest numbers of people are combined in disciplined action, public or private, élites will be forced to yield up concessions necessary to sustain and enlarge mass affiliation'.(11)

Delegates did not understand private use of collective gains, e.g. time saved.

However, whilst among delegates whose formative experiences were as protagonists of a social movement there was an intense desire to represent their fellow workers' interests, sacrificing free time and bonuses in the process, the unions were less willing to be subject to democracy from below. Within them there was considerable resistance to the formation of the new delegate structures. The engineering sections of the unions botched together a compromise at their first unitary conference in March 1970; the Factory Council composed of delegates was accepted as the new unit of factory organisation in the factory, but on the condition that the union branches ('Sezioni Sindacali') and the Internal Commissions set them up, while continuing to represent workers in their own right. By the time of the conference the following year, some 168 factory councils had been set up in the province of Milan, but without union sponsorship. The conference subsequently accepted the Factory Councils as the successor to the other bodies. The Confederations, however, were more cautious. The CGIL

called for the postponement of the decision until after the hoped-for reunification of the unions, before it changed its position in January 1972. Meanwhile the CISL favoured the reinforcement of the existing structures.(12)

Of the unions in Milan only the FIM-CISL consistently championed the new forms of shopfloor democracy.(13) However, even this maverick body showed disquiet about the emergence of forces outside union control. An article, written by a prominant spokesman for the Left in the CISL, urged:

> 'the task of serious revolutionaries is not to make conjectures about conciliar socialism, reducing the question of the union to its use as an instrument for other purposes, but to apply their energies to radically transform the unions, despite political and bureaucratic opposition'.

He warned against the danger of producing an English-style situation characterised by shopstewards who were 'corporativist'.(14) The Italian unions wanted to make sure that the new democracy was channelled through their organisations.

The union leaderships wanted to prevent rank-and-file democracy threatening the delicate compromises agreed between the Confederations. The new organisms had to be subjected to what the CGIL called the 'general and binding criteria that give political unity to the structures'.(15) In other words, they had to be compatible with the existing organisations and therefore as much like the Internal Commissions as possible.

The unions, therefore, sought to institutionalise the movement. This was achieved, especially from 1972 onwards, by several means; Pizzorno writes:

> 'Above all, candidates were chosen according to union lists. Then, especially in cases of clashes between the leadership and the rank-and-file, the electoral constituencies were widened, thereby dissolving homogeneous group representation.'(16)

Then, negotiating power was centralised in the hands of the executive committee of the Factory Council. The delegates became only important in moments of mobilisation when an extended network of activists was required. The role of the section and factory meetings ('assemblea') was curtailed; from being the sovereign bodies of the movement in which participation involved being physically present, expressing opinions and allotting tasks, they became plebiscitory moments; they tended to assume the character of demonstrations with long speeches by the representatives, agendas set in line with overall union strategies, and rituals designed to affirm collective identity and minimise shows of dissent.(17)

Although the new forms of representation derived their names and their increased powers from the movement of the Hot Autumn, the aspiration to reconstruct the unions (not to mention society) in their image was defeated. Similarly, the radical demands and forms of struggle developed by the movement were adapted to facilitate negotiation. One of the most significant innovations was the so-called 'Inquadramento Unico' which the unions promoted in 1972. This entailed 'squaring the circle' by trying to reorganise

the grading system to recognise both skill ('professionalità'), and demands for parity and reduction of grades. Quintessentially, it required extensive technical knowledge and bargaining skills, and provided a framework for reaching compromises. As such, it privileged the role of the union officials and the construction of a complex apparatus for processing disagreements.(18)

The Unions and Social Protest

The key processes of institutionalisation of the workers' movement centred on the 'consolidation' by the unions of the gains of the Hot Autumn. Building of 'power over' the workers was a necessary precondition of their strategy for winning greater influence within civil society and the State. Pizzorno has formulated this relationship in terms of a 'political exchange' in which the unions guarantee consensus within the system in exchange for benefits conferred by the State.(19) In this framework, the equivalent of the strike is the withdrawal of cooperation. The Hot Autumn involved such a withdrawal (though the unions were not in the first instance responsible for this), and the very success of the non-cooperation put the unions in an unprecedented position in representing a wide spectrum of discontent within society. They were said to have usurped functions proper to the political party. As Vittorio Foa wrote in 1969: 'Today, with the deterioration in the representative institutions, the unions increasingly have a need for a real linkage between civil and political society'.(20)

However, the unions, it seems, were almost fearful of their new power to mobilise protest. The Piazza Fontana bombing threw into relief the political stakes involved in widespread industrial action. In July 1970, they lost their nerve; the Confederations revoked a general strike when the government threatened to resign if it was carried out.

The possibilities for the unions to mobilise protest were very considerable in the context of the early 70's, when burgeoning social movements appeared in the schools and further educational establishments, on housing estates, in prisons and in the factories. The factories themselves were no longer closed off from their surrounding neighbourhoods, but connected to them via associational networks (parties, political groups, tenants' organisations and student-worker liaison). The other identities of the worker (parent, tenant etc.) were being mobilised. Furthermore, there was a willingness to support other groups such as the homeless poor and students. At the grass-roots, people were prepared to use their power to disrupt, which the Hot Autumn had shown to be so effective.

The unions' response to these developments was contradictory. They saw opportunities to extend their influence in society, and hence to strengthen their bargaining power with the institutions. They also wanted to have a hegemonic role over social movements in order to prevent the emergence of dangerous forms of protest, such as the insurrections in Reggio Calabria in 1970, which, it was believed, had been led by neo-fascists.(21) At the same

time, there was anxiety, especially in national leaderships, about promoting illegal and disruptive actions undertaken by the rank-and-file. This oscillation can be seen in connection with housing struggles, the autoreduction campaigns and the 150 hours scheme; these show how important the unions were in representing movements in society, but also how their role was full of contradictions.

The struggles over housing in Italy grew up in the context of the students' and workers' movements (the first rent strikes in Milan took place in January 1968), but did not come to occupy a central place in social conflicts until 1974 when soaring inflation made it important for the unions to defend living standards outside the factory. However, from 1970, in Milan, protest welled up among the poor in the rundown central 'quartieri' and on the estates of the 'hinterland'. One of the papers of the Catholic workers' organisation wrote of the plight of these people:

> 'The contradictions of our society are there before us. On the one hand there are the families of immigrant workers, who, driven by the struggle to survive and called up by the industrial development of the metropolis, have been thrown into situations of unemployment, slum habitations, overcrowding, high rents and the 'laagers' called 'evictee centres'. On the other hand, the authorities build palaces for the rich in areas that were once working class.'(22)

Evicted families squatted in municipal housing on the estates at Gallaratese. The following year, homeless families squatted houses in Via Tibaldi, and got involved in dramatic

confrontations with the police, involving students from the Architecture Faculty, political groups, and the FIM-CISL. In April 1971, after several evictions from squats, a group of women invaded Palazzo Marini, the municipal headquarters, and hurled furniture out of the windows.(23) By 1976 there were 1,500 squats of public and 37 squats of private housing units.(24)

The protest actions over housing presented special problems for the unions. Firstly, the leading protagonists ('sub-proletarians', student agitators, Southerners and women) had little to do with the traditional organisations of the working class. Indeed, the latter had tended to discriminate against 'sub-proletarians'.(25) Secondly, the first tenants' bodies such as the Tenants' Union ('Unione Inquilini' (UI)) were formed independently of the unions, and privileged 'movementist' tactics of direct action. Thirdly, the unions themselves were linked to the parties represented in local government and institutions such as the IACP (the municipal housing authority). Some elements of the unions came out in support of the housing struggles; the FIM in Milan was especially active in promoting what it saw as an elementary issue of social justice which justified defiance of oppressive property laws. Similarly, many factory councils were sympathetic. They adopted Unione Inquilini's demands for rents equivalent to 10% of the family wage, for greater public housing provision (in Milan it amounted to 15% of the total), and for the requisition of vacant property.(26) The union Left then campaigned for the setting up of the 'area councils'

('consigli di zona') to enable representation outside the factories.(27) However, the national leaderships preferred the traditional general strikes and demonstrations in the pursuit of housing reforms, since these gave them greater central control and served to apply pressure on governments. In Milan, the CGIL responded to the housing struggles by creating the SUNIA, a tenants union, and, to keep pace, the CISL followed suit. These organisations acted as lawyers and negotiators for the individual tenant, and as campaign mobilisers. In cases of squats of public housing, they opposed the squatters in the name of the would-be tenant. In this way, the resources of the Confederations were used to undermine the protest movement, and to win participation in the local authorities through their ability to guarantee order. This orientation was reinforced in 1975 with the accession of a Left wing junta to power in Milan and in other cities.(28)

The autoreduction campaign of 1974-5 created similar problems for the unions in their attempt to mediate between the institutions of the State and the popular protest movements. Apart from anything else, the unilateral non- or part-payment of transport, gas, electricity and telephone tickets and bills was illegal.

Autoreduction already had a recent history. The term was coined and put into circulation by the Pirelli workers, though their reduction of output tactic had little to do with the subsequent development of autoreduction. It was a consumer's rather than a producer's activity. The first real examples

of autoreduction are found in the sporadic and spontaneous non-payment of transport fares by students and workers in 1968-9. Often ticket-collectors allowed demonstrators to travel free of charge, while the latter behaved as if the trams and buses belonged to them. In 1971 young people in Milan enforced price reductions at pop concerts by threatening to sabotage performances.(29) However, it required the activity of Factory Council delegates and Zone Committees ('consigli di zona' - delegates representing an area) to provide the backbone to the resistance to rises in transport fares, and electricity, gas and telephone prices in 1974-5.

Engineering workers and their unions, especially in Turin, where the movement originated, were leading protagonists. Delegates issued tickets at reduced rates on the private buses, and set up organisations to collect the names of those pledged to refuse payment of the increases on the other bills. Although the unions at national level opposed the spreading of the protest, or used it cautiously as a tactic to apply pressure on the government and local authorities, rather than encouraging a new arm of popular action, it was from a factory-based syndicalism that the movement drew its strength.(30) The avowed aim of the autoreductions was to defend the gains of the Hot Autumn from the effects of inflation. In the process, groups of workers pushed the unions into acting like political parties and into legitimating illegal forms of struggle, thereby encouraging civil disobedience by other social groups.(31) Whereas the unions' natural adversaries were private and public companies, the logic of the new turn in social conflict made the State into the enemy. However, it was not a

logic that was acceptable to the union confederations, and was only canvassed by a small minority of workers close to the extraparliamentary groups. Indeed, the autoreduction campaigns were the last significant mobilisations to uphold direct action politics against the tendency to substitute confrontation by dialogue.

The 150 Hours Scheme, which was incorporated into the engineering contract of 1973, differs from the previously mentioned examples of the unions' relationship to protest movements in that it did not arise directly in response to them. An anecdote has it that the wife of a trade union leader was responsible for the idea of the scheme, which gave workers 150 hours a year paid study leave to help them catch up on their education (i.e. get the basic middle school diploma - '_terza media_'). Whatever the immediate origins of the proposal, its germination and particular shape cannot be understood without reference to the 1968-9 debates on workers' access to education and the critiques of schooling 'from a workers' point of view'. 'Positive utopias' (to use Vittorio Foa's words) such as the '4 hours work - 4 hours study' idea anticipated the new scheme.(32) The 150 Hours Scheme was part recuperative, part 'cultural holiday'. It was designed to enable workers to get a certificate (an estimated 80% of engineering workers did not have the '_terza media_') which affected promotion. But it has been run under union auspices rather than by the State or by private schools. Thus the contents of the courses, the forms of pedagogy, the selection of students and the appointment of teachers has depended on the unions. State examiners, for instance,

have tacitly accepted collective assessment. The implementation of the scheme has led to some remarkable experimentation in group learning and teaching.(33) The student and worker protagonists of 1968-9 were brought together again in the classroom. Groupings of intellectuals in Milan, from the cooperative library of the Centro Ricerche sui Modi di Produzione, the Political Science Faculty of the State University and the Calusca book-shop, channelled great energies into teaching and preparing study notes for the courses.(34) Workers drew on their own experiences and knowledge of the labour process, of health problems etc. so that sessions involved an exchange between students and teachers. Even if some of the early utopianism disappeared, giving way to instrumental orientations, the scheme showed the unions' capacity for interpreting and channelling forces of protest beyond the confines of the factory. Sections of New Left intellectuals were drawn into the orbit of the unions, which acted as their new 'Prince'.(35)

In 1973-74 the unions reached the height of their influence and prestige among exploited and oppressed social groups, and among radical intellectuals. They, rather than the parties of the Left, had managed to strengthen the hand of social movements and to lead them without suffocating their autonomy. The unions had capitalised on 'operaism' (which in the 1960's had been deeply anti-union) to assert the idea of 'workers' centrality' ('centralità operaia') which they claimed to represent. Workers' organisation and methods of struggle had become the model for other forms of social mobilisation (tenants' unions etc.). The making of a

'working class culture' had become the goal of Left-wing intellectuals. The 150 Hours Scheme symbolised the unions' hegemony over agitators both inside and outside the working class. However, that hegemony was fragile and conjunctural. Economic crisis and changes in the Confederations' policies created a new situation in which unions lost their leading role within civil society.

Emilio Reyneri dates the change from 1973 when:

> 'The close connection between factory struggles over wages and work organisation, and struggles directed towards the institutions, full-employment policies and the South was broken. The unions tilted the balance decisively in favour of long-term political and economic policies as they had always done in periods of crisis and recession.'(36)

The consequence of this was that, over the following years, the unions were guided much more by the decisions of the Confederal secretariats than by what was discussed on the shopfloor. In other words, there was a return to the practices of the mid-1960's; political parties re-asserted themselves at all levels of the organisations; consultation with institutions was privileged over consultation of the rank-and-file; internal democracy withered whilst intolerance towards dissent increased. The gap within the organisations, between the leaderships and the ordinary membership was greatly accentuated, and intellectuals close to the unions grew more and more critical.(37)

To provide an adequate account of the institutionalisation of the unions in this period would require analyses of how Italian society changed as a whole. It would mean looking at how the

conception of 'workers' centrality' became increasingly anachronistic with the marginalisation of the 'mass worker', and the rise in unemployment and the 'black labour' market. It would be necessary to chart the electoral swings towards the PCI in the 1975 and 1976 elections, and the replacement of the union by the party as the 'modern Prince'.(38) However, given limitations of space, it is only possible to note generally how the unions in the mid '70's ceased to represent a broader spectrum of social protest and social movements. In Part 5 this change is looked at through the movements of social groups, women and youth in particular, which found themselves excluded from the cultural as well as the socio-economic world inhabited by the unions. But what appeared in the 1970's as the redefinition of the unions' role in society, can also be seen as the end of an era in which the workers' movement shaped all forms of social conflict and protest. Institutionalisation is too limited a concept with which to make sense of this historical turning-point.

FOOTNOTES: PART 4

Chapter 21

1. Alessandro Pizzorno, 'Due logiche dell'azione di classe', pp. 28-32.

2. Lotta Continua (7-2-70).

3. Ida Regalia, Rappresentanza operaia e sindacato, pp. 215-216.

4. Rina Barbieri interview.

5. Guido Romagnoli, Consigli di fabbrica e democrazia sindacale (Milan, 1976), pp. 168-187.

6. Gian Primo Cella, 'La composizione sociale e politica degli apparati sindacali metalmeccanici della Lombardia' in Prospettiva Sindacale, 1, April 1973, p. 11.

7. Ida Regalia, Lotte operaie e sindacato, Vol. 4, p. 101.

8. See Part 5, Chapter 25, pp. 559-566.

9. I. Regalia, Rappresentanza operaia e organizzazione sindacale, pp. 220-223.

10. Pietro Marcenaro makes an interesting observation on how the politicised workers and activist delegates post 1969 condemned workers who 'saved time' (by working extra fast for short periods etc.) so that they could play cards. The most minute everyday 'private' resistances were subjected to the collective scrutiny in the person of the delegate; the delegate thought of the factory as 'central to politics and as the point of departure for social change', and abhorred the individual use put to time that needed to be controlled by the collectivity; P. Marcenaro, Riprendere Tempo (Turin, 1981), pp. 60-1.

11. F. Piven and R. Cloward, Poor People's Movements, pp. X-XI.

12. G. Romagnoli, Consigli di fabbrica, pp. 68-70.

13. Sandro Antoniazzi, Per lo sviluppo dei consigli, in Dibattito Sindacale, November-December 1970, pp. 5-12.

14. G. Sclavi, Due CISL, pp. 23-8.

15. G. Romagnoli, Consigli di fabbrica, p. 76.

16. A. Pizzorno, 'Due logiche dell'azione di classe', pp. 28-9.

17. I. Regalia, 'Le assemblee', pp. 107-108.

18. Tatiana Pipan and Dario Salerni, Il sindacato come soggetto di equilibrio (Milan, 1975), pp. 92-124.

19. A. Pizzorno, 'Scambio politico e identità collettiva nel conflitto di classe', in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno, Conflitti in Europa (Milan, 1977), pp. 407-433.

20. Vittorio Foa, 'La frontiera politica del sindacato', in Problemi del Socialismo, 39, (1969), p. 223.

21. The concern to maintain public order was also a concern to promote suitable conditions for trade union activity. Unions since the post war period feared social chaos. Di Vittorio, secretary general of the CGL had said: 'To the extent to which the unions make these gains - thereby acquiring sufficient power and prestige to defend the workers' interests in a free and orderly fashion ... - bloody uprisings and terrorist attacks ... will become useless and will disappear from the social scene. All of society will benefit thereby as will its degree of civilisation'; quoted by A. Pizzorno, 'Sull'azione politica dei sindacati', p. 877.

22. Il Giornale dei Lavoratori, paper of the ACLI, 23/24, (17-6-71); quoted in Mariella Moresco and Giordano Fornasier, 'Lotte 'spontanee' per la casa a Milano del 1945 al 1975 e loro rapporto con le istituzione e le forze sociali', Tesi di laurea, Università Cattolica del Sacre Cuore, Milano, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, 1976, pp. 71-2.

23. Ibid., pp. 44-86.

24. Thomas Angotti, Housing in Italy (New York, 1977), p. 53.

25. The history of the workers' movement is also the history of how groups of workers have differentiated themselves from the very poorest in society, how the waged have separated themselves from the unwaged. The unions and parties at different moments in Italian history confirmed these divisions, even when speaking up for class unity. The late '60's and early 1970's mark an important moment of questioning of the category 'working class' as defined by the Left orthodoxy. Radical Catholics and the extreme Left discovered the sub-proletariat of South and North, of the prisons and the slums. See Commissione Carceri di Lotta Continua, Liberare tutti i dannati della terra (Rome, 1972).

26. Mariella Moresco and Giordano Fornasier, 'Lotte 'spontanee' per la casa a Milano', pp. 86-7.

27. Quaderni del Centro Operaio, Consigli di zona (Rome, 1974).

28. Mariella Moresco and Giordano Fornasier, 'Lotte 'spontanee' per la casa a Milano', pp. 178-190.

29. Lotta Continua (26-6-71).

30. Eddy Cherki and Michael Wieviorka, 'Autoreduction Movements in Turin', in Semiotext(e), 3, (1980), pp. 72-80; Alemanni, Ferigo and Ghedda, Autoriduzione (Milan, 1975).

31. The main forms of autoreduction carried out in the mid '70's required a high degree of coordination, which is one of the reasons why union involvement was so important to their success. However, there were cases of hit-and-run autoreduction in supermarkets, and agitators on the Left 'theorised' or fantasised about 'proletarian expropriations'. A leaflet is reported to have been found after a raid in a supermarket which said: 'The goods we took are ours just as everything which exists is ours because we have produced it through our exploitation ... Not civil disobedience ... not sub-proletarian anger, but the embryo of political struggle against exploitation, parallel to that in the factory'; Contro Informazione, November 1974. Dario Fo's play: 'We can't pay? We won't pay!' begins with a scene in which a working class housewife arrives home after doing the shopping without paying.

32. The impact of the 'cultural revolution' and the factory militancy on the 150 hours scheme becomes evident by comparising it with French legislation which was geared more to the needs of industry than to workers' needs, and which was State-run.

33. Danilo Giori and Gabriella Rossetti Pepe, '150 ore - per una cultura di classe', in Classe, 9 (1973), pp. 67-88.

34. These study notes comprised extracts from studies on the labour market, piece-rates, union history and other subjects which had been researched by the radicalised sociologists mentioned in Part 1, Chapter 1. An introduction spelt out their political orientation: 'The use of the 150 Hours courses is of great importance since it will involve a large number of workers in implementing this contract gain, allowing a mass growth in the cultural and political knowledge of the working class'. It warned against subordinating the courses to 'capitalist technological development'; Centro Ricerche sui Modi di Produzione, Dispense su salari e inflazione, 2, (Milan, 1974), p. 2.

35. The reviews Classe, Fabbrica e Stato and Inchiesta in 1973-74 carry many articles full of enthusiasm for the 150 hours scheme. An example: 'For the first time the principle of education as a right in general has been introduced, not tied to company interests, but ... as an attempt to break down the separation between work and study', in Fabbrica e Stato, July-August, 1973, p. 3.

36. Emilio Reyneri, 'Il sindacato in Italia oggi', in Il Mulino, July-August 1977, p. 505.

37. See the analyses of contemporary trade unionism coming from Alessandro Pizzorno, Emilio Reyneri, Marino Regini, Ida Regalia and other sociologists. Within the unions similar opinions were being voiced; Bruno Manghi of the FIM-CISL of Milan wrote: 'Today the unions are treating the political institutions as sacred. A veil of untouchability ('un velo di intoccabilità') covers local bodies, parliament, the parties, the regions and so on ... It is difficult for the unions, now that they have become legitimated, to do anything but celebrate the institutions without regard to their politics since they have adopted a static and limited role within the political system'; Bruno Manghi, Declinare Crescendo (Bologna, 1977), p. 31.

38. Vittorio Foa wrote: 'The approach of the Communists to the area of government invites people to think that politics is 'in command' ('al posto di commando'), not in terms of class conflict but of mediation and the management of society ... The same council structures ... allow people to imagine a transition from waged worker to producer ... that means a transition from a traditional capitalism to a capitalism with workers' participation'; V. Foa, 'Il sindacato di fronte alla transizione', p. 172.

PART 5

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PROTEST IN THE 1970'S

CHAPTER 22: RESIDUAL AND EMERGENT POLITICAL FORMS

In the decade following the dramatic resurgence of social conflict in 1968, in Italy and in other Western capitalist countries, there was a spread and multiplication of oppositional movements. Alberto Melucci has listed the main examples:

> 'a) worker conflict involving new categories (semi-skilled, young and immigrant); b) trade union conflicts extended to different occupational groups (especially in the tertiary and public sectors); c) student movements; d) urban struggles; e) feminist movements; f) youth counter-culture; g) movements linked with sexuality; h) regional movements; i) ethnic conflicts; j) consumer protest; k) ecological movements; l) neo-religious and communitarian movements; m) anti-institutional protest (over justice, prisons, psychiatric hospitals); n) struggles linked to the problems of health and medicine.'(1)

There are, of course, considerable differences between these forms of action, and they have specific histories, but in various ways they can all be related to the movements of '68-9. It was the students' and workers' movements which provided the models which other movements attempted to emulate, revise or break away from.

The significance of the '68 legacy can be seen in how the thoughts of a generation continually returned to it. The struggles of those years were recounted in epic terms; oral accounts were supplemented by autobiographies, interviews, histories, anniversary editions and reprints which celebrated moments of heroism. The genre which can be

called the 'class struggle epic' was recreated. The worker emerged as a mythical figure in the iconography of the period, and is the protagonist of a particular type of narrative.

A picture of workers driving a stake into a dragon, which is labelled with the names of big corporations, contains several of the elements of an iconography.(2) The workers are represented as a uniform group without individualised features; they all lean forward and the figures' profiles signify common determination and purpose. They are involved in a 'struggle' with the enemy, which requires the whole force of their muscular and virile bodies. Their strength and power are celebrated, as is their violent assault on a pig-like personification of capitalism. Although this particular image is representative of only a part of the post '68 movement (the Marxist-Leninists who drew on a socialist realist iconography which had been revived during the Chinese Cultural Revolution),(3) its theme - working class as collective hero - is central to the political culture of the period.

Another leitmotif of the epic is the protagonist's struggle to transcend individualism, and the celebration of the moment of transcendence. It recurs especially in autobiographical accounts. Antonio Antonuzzo's story about his 'conversion' to unionism is but one example of a phenomenon which was most pervasive in oral form.(4) In the 1970's oral history developed to capture these memories for posterity, and to serve as a basis for reflection on the nature of subjectivities and experience. Above all, worker militants

were encouraged to recount their personal histories.(5) An interesting example of this is an interview with a Fiat worker, Franco Platania, recorded in 1974. The story starts with how Platania conducts a personal war with the company (how he outwits foremen and survives the hell of the production-line), and follows his adventures through to the Hot Autumn when, he declares, he changed utterly as a person:

> 'At that moment my personal biography loses all interest as far as individual motivations are concerned. I joined a communist organisation, Lotta Continua. The important moments of my life tended to become one with the collective moments of struggle that were being shared by the whole working class of Fiat. I felt that every day, as I took on increased political responsibilities, I also took on new dimensions as a human being'.(6)

In this instance the epic struggles and the joining of a revolutionary organisation are elided, but that is really a secondary element in a typical narrative. More important is the way in which the individual's contingent and haphazard story is subsumed in the story of a class, which is also a future and a destiny.

The re-telling of '68 was an aspect of an important shift in political attitudes. It was necessary, in the wake of the social movements, to legitimate undertakings with reference to an active consensus formed in collective struggles, rather than with reference to institutional definitions of consensus, such as the parliamentary vote. Thus, within the unions, there was a continual evocation of the Hot Autumn, which represented a moment of rebirth. The struggles of

'68-9 were, in other words, a fount of legitimacy, and a mythic renaissance for their protagonists. However, the struggles were interpreted in different and conflicting ways, and during the 1970's there was a process of reappraisal. It was said that 'lessons had to be learnt', and that the earlier movements had limited and even prevented the emergence of radically new forms of opposition. By the time of the tenth anniversary of 1968 the number of critical, and even dismissive, analyses had largely displaced the celebratory accounts.(7) Another generation had grown up for whom '68 was a second-hand experience. From a vantage point in the early 1980's it is possible to get a clearer picture of how the '68-9 movements left a contradictory legacy, which looked backwards into the past, as well as anticipating future developments.

With the benefit of hindsight, some useful, though necessarily cautious, distinctions can be made between the political and social projects which took shape in the 1970's. These can be broadly divided into 'residual' and 'emergent' forms. These terms are more 'epochal' than the categories of 'movement' and 'institution' so far referred to which are more adequate for the analysis of the shorter term developments. The former are useful in highlighting longer term historical shifts. Raymond Williams offers a useful definition:

> 'By 'residual' I mean that some experiences, meanings and values, which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue - cultural as well as social - of some previous social formation. There is a

> real case of this in certain religious values ... A residual culture is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, but one has to recognise that, in real cultural activities, it may get incorporated into it ... The pressures are real, but certain genuinely residual meanings and practices in some important cases survive.
>
> By 'emergent' I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new significances and experiences, are continually being created. But there is then a much earlier attempt to incorporate them, just because they are part - and not yet a defined part - of effective contemporary practice ... It may be true of some earlier phases of bourgeois society that there were some areas of experience ... which it was prepared to assign as the sphere of private life ... But I am sure that ... because of developments in the social character of labour, in the social character of communications, and in the social character of decision, it extends much further into certain hitherto resigned areas of experience ... Thus, the effective decision, as to whether a practice is alternative or oppositional, is now made within a very much narrower scope ... This is usually the difference between individual and small-group solutions to social crisis and those solutions which properly belong to political and ultimately revolutionary practice. But it is often a very narrow line ... A meaning or practice may be tolerated as a deviation, but as the necessary area of effective dominance extends, the same meanings and practices can be seen by the dominant culture, not merely as disregarding or despising it, but as challenging it.'(8)

Williams' definitions are primarily made in reference to cultural practices, but they can equally be applied more generally. They parallel Touraine's analyses of 'traditional' and 'new' social movements.(9) Williams differs in putting more stress on how the 'residual' survives and can be

reactivated, and he continually underlines the ambiguities and double-sidedness of attempts to counter the dominant order.

Marx's remarks in 18th Brumaire about bourgeois revolutions give a complementary perspective in which political action and cultural practices fuse:

> 'Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted by the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, and in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such moments of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries, and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.'(10)

It is important to note that emergent and new movements can only struggle into existence by drawing on existing traditions. These provide not just easily disposable accoutrements, but the very languages with which to think about social change. At the same time, they impose limits, and make it difficult to communicate experiences for which adequate words do not seem to exist. However, although the new forms can only emerge by selecting, transforming and/or discarding the old, Marx writes that the residual forms can also be revived in ways that parody and that flee from reality, making 'ghosts walk about again'.(11) Indeed, it

is Marx's contention that only proletarian revolutions can 'strip off all superstition in regard to the past'; for him they find their 'poetry' in the future. However, a century later, the neatness of the distinction between the modes of 'proletarian' and 'bourgeois' revolution seems dubious in a way it never did in Marx's lifetime, as the experiences of '68-9 testify.

The social movements of those years can be seen as comprising a rich mixture of 'residual' and 'emergent' forms which contained both 'oppositional' and 'alternative' practices. The student movement is an excellent example. It was a new phenomenon historically, and brought a new order of social conflicts into the open. As Alain Touraine has observed of the French situation:

> 'the students are representative of all those who suffer more from social integration and cultural manipulation directed by the economic structures than from economic exploitation and material misery.'(12)

At the same time, the ideologies of student revolt were deeply influenced by the ideas of Marxism and, to a lesser extent, by radical religious thinking. The movement's symbols were borrowed directly from the workers' movement, as was the rhetoric of its leaders. The 'residual' forms played a significant role in reactivating protest, as has been seen in the case of the Marxist 'heresies' in the 1960's, but the revival of neo-Leninist organisations led to an impasse; the old residues not only were inadequate in the sort of analyses and politics they offered, but they actively resisted the emergence of new forms of social action. Whilst the social movement at its height combined different and often conflicting

practices, when it went into decline it fragmented. Subsequently, some of the fragments, such as the neo-Leninist ones, tended to stand in the way of new movements, whilst others contributed to their formation.

It is perhaps possible to schematically distinguish between those forces or tendencies coming out of the late '60's which anticipated and stimulated a 'movementist' politics ('emergent' forms), and those which proposed organisational solutions ('residual' forms) to what they regarded as the failings of social movements. As will be seen, this polarisation is too simple, there is no clear demarcation between the 'backward-looking' and the 'forward-looking'. History is not a linear development, a railway line connecting past and future. It is notable that what Touraine refers to as 'traditional' forms (industrial militancy, for example) continued to dominate the shape of social conflict in the 1970's, and were themselves extended and realigned in novel ways. Nonetheless, the distinction is not purely a convenience for analysis. The increasingly drastic and diverse reassessments of '68-9 in the following decade signalled a real polarisation; basic assumptions were put into crisis. It was then no longer clear that the labour movement was the major progressive force nor was it clear what, if anything, was meant by the labels 'the Left' or 'comrade'.

Indeed, the conflicts which emerged in terms of 'movement versus organisation/bureaucracy' (itself a frame of reference typical of traditional politics), involved questions of precisely the legitimacy or value of a labelling

process, and hence of a political subculture's whole vocabulary and sets of codes. The protagonists of a 'movement' politics did not merely propose a different answer to the question 'how should opposition be organised?', but asked new sets of questions concerning aspects of people's lives which had previously been excluded from politics altogether. They introduced notions of autonomy and control which required social action of a kind incompatible with parties, unions and other organisational models.

The emergence of these new forms of social conflict is the central theme in the sections which follow. These will focus on youth protest and the feminist movement in Italy, since they have been widely seen as the most representative forms of what has been called a 'post-political politics'. Rather than attempt to provide a detailed history or chronology of the formation of these movements, there will be something more akin to a brief outline of their development, which compares them with their forerunners of the late '60's. The recurring question that will be asked is: to what extent were these movements a continuation of tendencies present in the mobilisations of '68-9 and to what extent did they represent a rupture with that past? This question entails looking at the Italian situation (an equivalent examination of the French, German or British case would tell a very different story), but raises the more epochal and general observations of Alain Touraine on the consequences of the transition from a predominantly industrial to a post industrial society. No answer can be given on this question without a thorough consideration of the changes in

the political, social and economic structures of advanced capitalist societies (and this will not be attempted here), but it is possible to undertake the more limited task of seeing how social movements evolved over the '70's. Analysis will centre on how social actors worked with inherited models and adapted them to their needs.

Two chapters, therefore, deal with the youth and women's movements (in that order), but the first chapter will take the case of red terrorism in Italy. This requires some explanation since terrorism (as will be made clear) cannot be considered a social movement. The intention is rather to look at the phenomenon as a residual form of politics. It, too, was a product of the political upheavals of the late '60's, and no account of the oppositional political developments following 1968-9 would be complete without an analysis of the rise and fall of terrorism.

FOOTNOTES: PART 5

Chapter 22

1. Alberto Melucci, Sistema politico, partiti e movimenti sociali (Milan, 1979), p. 150.

2. For a discussion of this iconography by historians, see Eric Hobsbawm, 'Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography', in History Workshop Journal, 6, Autumn 1978, pp. 107-121.

3. This image appears, for example, on a Sinistra Proletaria leaflet of July 1970.

4. See Part 2, Chapter 6, pp. 129-132.

5. There was a rediscovery of a native tradition of oral history before the turn to Anglo-Saxon academic models; see Cesare Bermani, 'Dieci anni di lavoro con le fonti orali', in Primo Maggio, 5, Spring 1975. Luigi Manconi describes the 'life-history' ('storie di vita') as the most innovative genre of the post '68 period; Nuovo e difficile, p. 12.

6. Franco Platonia, '23 years at Fiat', in Red Notes, Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis, p. 108.

7. Guido Viale's Il sessantotto published in 1978 remains caught in a time-warp since it substantially reproduces his ideas of 1968-9 when he was a leader in Lotta Continua. For a spoof celebration, see Cooperativo Centro Documentazione 1968-1978 - Dieci anni di invecchiamento (Florence 78). (Translatable as 'Ten Years of Ageing') One cartoon, which shows an ex-leader looking into a crystal ball labelled '68, has a phantom gypsy saying 'Your future is in the past'.

8. Raymond Williams, Problems in Materialism and Culture (London, 1980), pp. 41-2.

9. See Part 1, Chapter 3, pp. 67-70.

10. Karl Marx, '18th Brumaire', in Selected Works (London, 1970), p. 96.

11. Ibid., p. 97.

12. Alain Touraine, The May Movement, p. 355.

CHAPTER 23: RED TERRORISM - THE RED BRIGADES: SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF '68?

Alberto Melucci has referred to red terrorism as 'paradoxically both the most radical result and the most radical antithesis of the new 'class movements'.(1) It is a paradox that commentators have too easily dismembered into one of its constituent parts; they have thereby interpreted '68 as the pandora's box of modern Italy, or they have written of red terrorism as quite extraneous to the social movements.(2) It is the paradox, however, which is central. Without analysing the ambiguities and the polysemic elements of the subculture created by the social movements, it is impossible to make sense of both the coexistence and the conflict between the social movements and the Red Brigades, the first major armed organisation.

In the early 1970's the coexistence between the movements and armed organisations was often amicable. In the late '70's, however, separation and antagonism characterised the relationship between the majority in the new social movements and the project of the armed organisations. An outline of this development is useful in understanding how the Red Brigades represented a residual form of politics which, while being unequivocally oppositional, was fundamentally at odds with the idea of social movements that took root in 1968-9. Or, to put it another way, it was the very radicalness - the total nature of the Red Brigades' opposition to the dominant order - which made them regressive.

The Formative Years: From Sabotage to Assassination

The Red Brigades announced their formation in a leaflet, dated October 20th 1970, in which they described themselves as 'autonomous workers' organisations ... ready to fight the bosses and their lackeys on their own ground as equals'.(3) The founder members had all been active in the movements of the previous two years; Renato Curcio, for example, who was the leading theorist among them, used to edit a political review at Trento University. Their decision to take up arms was seen by them as a break with, but also a maturation of, developments in social conflicts. Early documents emphasise the limits of the Hot Autumn struggles; they are described as disorganised, localised and largely subordinate to the capitalist system; ('it is not possible to bargain with the bosses for socialism'). The blame for the non-revolutionary outcome of the workers' action is laid at the door of the 'revisionists' (the Communist Party and others), who were said to have contained the movements within the bounds of legality.(4) It is this 'legalism' which is identified again and again by the Red Brigades as the principal weakness of the oppositional forces. Respect for the law is seen as a crippling handicap in the presence of a capitalist class which unleashes state violence whenever threatened. The bloody events of Avola, Battipaglia, and the Piazza Fontana bombing seemed to provide irrefutable evidence of this analysis. Yet, in the eyes of Red Brigades, the working class had shown itself ready to use violence during the mass mobilisations and in everyday clashes with management.

The idea of 'proletarian violence' was by no means exclusive to those choosing to engage in armed struggle.

As has been seen, it was widely canvassed within the social movements. Moreover, violent action was a significant, if largely symbolic, aspect of clashes with the police or with foremen. 'War' metaphors abounded in the language of the Left. The Red Brigades could therefore legitimately claim to be drawing on a 'tradition' and not just a movement's 'spontaneous' outburst. Their proclaimed aim of building 'proletarian counter-power' in the factories, which entailed the 'dismantling of the hierarchies of command', was a basic element in the '_operaist_' politics shared with other political groupings such as Potere Operaio and Lotta Continua.(5) (It should be noted that many of the original members of the Red Brigades were part of the Collettivo Politico Metropolitano (CPM), which was very much in this tradition.) Moreover, the Red Brigades conceived of the complementary ideas of 'proletarian justice' in terms which were common to Marxist-Leninist tendencies in the movement. This meant that 'the people' ('_popolo_') had to create its own standards of justice in its struggle against the dominant laws, and that the 'enemy' had to be subjected to its jurisdiction. The cardinal ideas of 'proletarian violence' and 'proletarian justice' were not Red Brigades' inventions; they were present in the social movements. But, as will be seen by looking at the Red Brigades 'in action', they combined what were disparate elements in the activities of the social movements to produce a systematic terrorist strategy.

The Red Brigades' first target was the Pirelli rubber company, which had been in the eye of the storm of industrial

conflict. In December 1970 the contract was once more due for renewal. Inside the Biccoca plant some former members of the CUB had formed the Collettivo Politico Metropolitano. It was on militants on the inside that the guerrilla actions relied for reports on the shopfloor situation, the listing of potential targets, the distribution of leaflets, feed-back and recruitment. It seems that the trade unions and PCI had regained hegemony among the workers after the crisis in their authority in 1968-9, but there remained bitter and frustrated activists on the Left. A publication by a group of these within the factory council warned against the danger of

> 'drawing false conclusions from the worsening of repression against the vanguards, thereby transposing the weakness of single groups on to the whole movement ... (this leads to) conclusions such as 'there's no longer any space', 'fascism is knocking at the door', 'we in the name of the working class must accept the level of struggle imposed by the bosses and give vent to proletarian violence'.'(6)

It was among these militants, who were often highly politicised and with experience of daily skirmishes with management, that the Red Brigades won support. Alessandro Pizzorno outlines the consequences of what he refers to as an 'excess of militancy', which became a particular problem with the formation of the Right wing Andreotti government in February 1972, and the exclusion of activists from the Factory Council offices. Pizzorno writes that the latter had:

> 'a bitter taste in the mouth left over from their hopes in 1969-70. Therefore they either remain on the margins, or they continue to work autonomously, exposed to the danger of making their political and union commitments extremist. The sudden brake put on the phase of conflict provoked this uncontrolled rush forward ('fuga in avanti').'(7)

Information on the Red Brigades' actions in Milan is limited; newspaper coverage is remarkably thin. However, it is possible to outline the main features from the communiqués issued by the terrorists themselves. Seven of these related to actions at Pirelli between November 1970 and April 1971.(8) Communiqué 1 listed the names of of 'boss's agents' ('servi del padrone'); thus, Ermanno Pellegrini 'has the job of keeping files on political activists, and every day sends a report to the personnel manager, and is in contact with the commissioners of police'; Brioschi, Ercole Carlo 'personnel secretary in cable division - champion scab'. These 'spies' are said to 'deserve pillory', and Giovanni Pirelli 'deserves to be abolished along with his piece-rates'; 'for every comrade they hit at during the struggle, one of them must pay the price'. Communiqué 2 calls this the 'principle of 'for one eye - two eyes, for a tooth - the whole face'. The names, the addresses and telephone numbers of the 'enemies' are provided with the obvious invitation to workers to make threatening calls and write abusive letters. In Communiqué 5 the best way of fighting for the contract is said to be 'using the only arm available by making the struggle more incisive and violent'.

The actual actions, however, comprised of destroying the cars of managers held responsible for sacking a leading militant, and of setting fire to a warehouse of tyres. Otherwise there is extensive incitement to sabotage in Communiqué 7 which detailed the 'intelligent' use of nail and spanner in disrupting production.

The purpose of the Red Brigades' actions was spelt out in the publication Sinistra Proletaria. It seems that the principal objective was to educate the workers and to make them see that the State was an organ of class repression which could only be fought with arms:

> 'It is time to move ahead to a general confrontation in order to establish the principle among the proletarian masses in struggle that 'no one has political power unless they have military power'; to educate the proletarian and revolutionary Left to the need for resistance and armed struggle through partisan actions; and to unmask the oppressive and repressive power structures and apparatuses that divide the class.'(9)

However, the scale of terrorist actions remained localised, and they were designed to supplement ongoing workers' struggles.

The other company whose management became the object of attack was Sit Siemens. In March 1972 Idalgo Macchiarini was kidnapped by the Red Brigades (although 'kidnap' is a strong word for twenty minutes in a van). He was photographed with a placard tied around his neck with the following inscription: 'Milan 3.3.72, Macchiarini, Idalgo, fascist manager of Sit Siemens, tried by the RB. The proletarians

have taken up arms, for the bosses it is the beginning of the end'. Another placard attached to the manager who had now been dumped in the road declared: 'Red Brigades - Bite and run - No one will remain unpunished - Strike one to educate a hundred - All power to the armed people'.(10)

During this period there were important struggles around housing, but the Red Brigades did not succeed in developing any actions which related to them, despite their obvious interest in going outside the factory. The actions that most caught the attention of Sinistra Proletaria, (the paper of the CPM, which had the hammer and sickle crossed by a rifle as its emblem), were the battles against evictions at Quarto Oggiaro:

> 'the law is the instrument of capital ... it is against this unjust violence that the people will exercise its just mass violence, as it has already started to do in many areas of Milan, Turin, Rome and Naples.'(11)

However, the Red Brigades concentrated their energies on winning over the factory-worker 'vanguards', and had little time for the sub-proletariat of the cities, who were the main protagonists of the early phases of the urban struggles. The Red Brigades described the city poor with disdain: 'the sub-proletariat is the worst of all allies'.(12)

Until April 1974 the targets of the Red Brigades remained constant. In June 1973 they kidnapped a manager of Alfa Romeo in Milan, and then in December a Fiat personnel manager. In addition they attacked 'yellow union' personnel

and property. The kidnappings were for longer periods, and involved the interrogation and trial of the victim. The Red Brigades consciously cultivated an alternative jurisdictional ritual, yet the factory-orientation continued. In April 1974 they changed their strategy when they kidnapped a judge, Mario Sossi, in Genoa. The terrain of struggle, they now claimed, had been extended beyond the factory and had reached the centre of the 'State-organised counter-revolution'. Sossi was found guilty of crimes against the proletariat but was released unharmed. However, the execution of procurator Coco two years later followed logically from the earlier actions and politics of the Red Brigades.

The escalation of operations, which reached their highpoint with the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro in the spring of 1978, turned the Red Brigades into an important political factor they had not been before. However, their actions were consistent with the perspectives outlined in the early 1970's. The main difference was that the 'movementist' elements had been systematically eliminated and replaced by a fully developed vanguardism.

The Meaning of Political Violence

The vanguardist conception of political action was shared by the majority of the groups of the extraparliamentary Left in the first half of the decade. They claimed to be or aspired to be the party of the working class just as Lenin's Bolsheviks had been in Russia or Mao's communists in China. The Red Brigades were not alone when they stopped calling

themselves 'autonomous workers' organisations' or 'armed proletarian vanguards', and called themselves the nucleus of the 'Partito Combattente' and 'the advanced guard of the working class'.(13) The radical difference lay in the fact that the Red Brigades alone based their notion of leadership and revolutionary struggle in the systematic use of violence. As Luigi Manconi has observed:

> 'For the Red Brigades the use of violence is the only form of struggle, the programme, the strategy, the mainspring and the verification of class consciousness'.(14)

In the social movements violence was just one of the many means of protest, and was usually a secondary feature. It was given meaning by the context in which it took place. What the Red Brigades attempted to do was firstly to imitate what they took to be popular forms (the threatening letter, punitive actions) and then to substitute them by more professional and military actions (kidnappings, assassinations) carried out 'in the name of the masses'.

The Red Brigades' assumption of vanguardist role did not alienate the considerable 'area of sympathy' which surrounded them up to the time of the Moro case. Indeed, their daring exploits won admiration, especially among contemporaries who had taken part in the social movements in the late '60's (even though the Left press regularly condemned terrorist actions as the work of agents provocateurs, fascists or the secret service). In a sense, figures like Renato Curcio and his comrade-in-arms Mara Cagol had chosen

to live out what others had fantasised; they sacrificed personal ambitions in the name of total commitment to 'the cause'. The rescue of Renato from prison, Mara's death in a shoot-out with the police, the treachery of the infiltrator, the ex-monk 'brother Girotto', and the kidnappings of hated judges - all these fired imaginations fed on the 'class struggle' epic.(15) Nor is there any reason to suppose that assassinations provoked popular revulsion. For a period the 'justice' administered by the Red Brigades was attributed a providential role. They were the 'avenging angels', who punished the corrupt oppressors. Manconi argues convincingly that the Red Brigades' perception of this

> 'has led them to stress the connotations of legitimacy and justice in their actions - trials/counter-trials; state prison/people's prison; army of the bourgeoisie/army of the proletariat ... From this flow the whole macabre and grotesque rituals of the 'trials', 'interrogations' and 'sentences', of a judicial procedure which imitates and inversely mirrors that of the state apparatuses'.(16)

The Red Brigades' capacity to attract sympathy and to capture the imagination, needs to be related to the State's continued paralysis or deliberate inactivity in the face of social protest. The divide between the 'paese reale' and the 'paese legale', between represented and representatives was deeper than before the major crisis of 1968-9. The terrorists could lay claim to a measure of popular support not given to the institutions. The actions of the authorities in the wake of the Piazza Fontana bombing were

a turning point in this respect. An article written by Franco Ferrarotti in 1970 pointed clearly to the dangers:

> 'Violence is always basically the response - inarticulate, desperate and often counter-productive - to grave inadequacies on the part of the authorities. (It points to) a loss of contact, communication and identification between the top and bottom of the social system, and to the exploitation by those above of those beneath them. The official holders of constituted power should be thankful for violence. It is their alarm-bell ... It is right to consider alternative solutions such as pacificism or non-violent resistance ... But their effectiveness depends on the existence of a common trust and respect for the rules of the game.'(17)

However, the politicians and authorities paid little attention to the alarm-bell, and showed an often arrogant disregard for the 'rules of the game', whilst always speaking of their belief in parliamentary democracy. The Piazza Fontana bombing was the first of a long series of cases involving conspiracy and corruption in high places for which no one was found guilty and punished.

Government repression, the 'strategy of tension' involving fascist bombings, and the inadequacies or absence of reforms created conditions favourable to terrorist initiatives. Norbeto Bobbio has observed how the development of secret government was parallelled by the growth of clandestine organisations:

> 'I call crypto-government the ensemble of actions performed by terrorist political forces that operate in the dark with the various secret services ... or at least without their opposition. The most disturbing episode of this kind in recent Italian history is undoubtedly the Piazza Fontana massacre. After more

> than ten years ... the mystery has not been revealed ... the darkness has not been lifted ... I limit myself to recalling the suspicion ... that state secrecy has been used to protect anti-state secrecy ... The degeneration of Italian democratic system began there ... if the existence of arcunum imperii remains a hypothesis, it is not a hypothesis but a tragic reality to have experienced the return, unthinkable a few years ago, of arcana seditionis in the form of terrorist action. Terrorism is an exemplary instance of occult power present throughout history. One of the founders of modern terrorism, Bakunin, proclaimed the necessity of an 'invisible dictatorship'. Whoever joins a terrorist group is forced to go underground, wear a mask, and exercise the same art of lying so often described as one of the prince's strategems. He, too, scrupulously follows the maxima that power is more effective the more he knows and sees without being seen.'(18)

However, the formation of the Red Brigades cannot be adequately explained as a reaction to state action. The short-lived and desperate history of the GAP, which tried to recreate a partisan organisation to fight an expected coup d'état, was an aberration.(19) The Red Brigades might have grown as a consequence of state's incompetance, wilful neglect or instrumental exploitation of terrorism, but they were, from the first, an offensive not a defensive organisation. Their project was conceived in the light of the immense potentialities for revolutionary transformation that the social movements appeared to have revealed. It is necessary, therefore, to examine more closely the chemistry which produced terrorism out of movements from which terrorist organisations were absent.

In the late 1960's and early '70's terrorism in Italy was primarily a fascist phenomenon. During 1968-9 there were a number of overtly fascist bombings, and others which disguised

themselves as 'Leftist' or 'anarchist'. It can be said that the extreme Right cultivated a cult of violence. As Barrington Moore has written, violence has historically been glorified by the Right, who have considered it an end in itself, and whose victims have been mainly among the weak. By contrast, for the Left violence was largely seen as undesirable and as a means to an end. It was, moreover, directed at the symbolic representatives of the oppressive and the powerful. However, Barrington Moore argues, the distinction has never been absolute. Historically, fascist violence has mobilised moral outrage on the part of oppressed groups, whilst enthusiasm for the redeeming and therapeutic effects of violence on both victim and victimised society has been found on the Left.(20) This does not mean that political differences are not crucial for understanding the forms and meanings of violent acts. Rather, it points to the unavoidably contradictory nature of all ideologies and their openess to 'readings' and appropriations that are put to repressive uses. This was clearly seen by Ernst Bloch when he wrote: 'Behind the citizen hid the bourgeois; God help us from what is hiding behind the comrade'.(21) It was the 'comrade' of '68 who became the 'comrade' of the Red Brigades.

'68 and the Elements of a Regressive Political Culture

The relationship between the political culture of '68 and the formation of red terrorism has been the subject of

extensive debate. Among the most interesting contributions are those of Nando Dalla Chiesa and Luigi Manconi, who both try to explore the contradictory ideas and practices which led to political outcomes of radically different kinds.(22) Dalla Chiesa suggests six headings under which the problem can usefully be examined. These are: the sovereignty of ideology over theory, the myth of the revolution around-the-corner, democracy as a formal problem, the anthropomorphic vision of capital, the disdain for human life, and the mystique of violence.(23)

Firstly, there is the question of 'ideology' - 'the triumph of dogmatism'. Dalla Chiesa writes:

> 'This element of the political culture is the prior and necessary condition on which the other elements develop ... and what makes them susceptible to terrorist developments'.(24)

Although the experience of '68-9 cannot be reduced to its sloganising, nevertheless, as has been concluded in an earlier chapter, 'ideologism' played a determinant role in structuring the realities of social conflict. The thriving of personality cults were but the crudest manifestation of a tendency to make society's image conform to the readings of Marx, Lenin and others. This had precluded the possibility of constructing political alternatives and created an atmosphere within organisations which was inimical to debate and discussion. The ideologues of the Red Brigades were among the most sectarian and fundamentalist in this respect. They recited the writings of Chairman Mao and Lenin ad nauseam, and their own tracts made claims and pronouncements (supported with

citations from the classics) as if from on high. The slogans on the placard around the neck of the kidnapped Idalgo Macchiarini were taken from Guevara and Lenin. For all their claims for novelty and originality (within the Communist tradition), the Red Brigades were exponents of ossified orthodoxies.

Secondly, the myth of incipient revolution common to the generation of '68 (as embodied in the slogan 'bosses and bourgeois - only a few months to go!') had important effects, not only in motivating action, but in producing acute disillusionment in the mid '70's, many, many months later. It privileged the efficiency, speed and timing of political action, and hence the subordination of means to pressing ends. The notions of the 'militarisation of power' and the need to face capital 'on an equal footing', were an extreme version of a widespread fetishisation of organisation within the extraparliamentary Left. But the Red Brigades interpreted the idea of 'class war' literally. For them, the civil war was not to be awaited; it was to be anticipated in the present by undertaking urban guerrilla action. The Red Brigades saw their task as anticipating the future by making the use of force a choice to be taken now rather than later. 'History' taught the necessity of arming the struggle in its earliest stages. For the Red Brigades 'History' could be analysed as a series of the transitions from spontaneous to organised violence through to civil war. So whilst 'the revolution' was not just around-the-corner, the unfolding of the historical process meant that the moment of reckoning could be counted on.

Thirdly, the political culture of '68 contained negative conceptions of democracy, which became the commonsense of many thousands of activists, especially within the extraparliamentary Left. Although the social movements of '68-9 saw remarkable experiments in political participation and unleashed radical democratic forces in Italian society, the New Left in the 1970's tended to reject the openess, accountability and full debate brought about by the social movements. These were dubbed 'democraticist' and 'petit bourgeois'. The criticisms levelled at parliamentary democracy, which was regarded as a sham and purely formalistic, were made of the movements' democratic practices. What became important was the application of the 'correct line'; meetings were simply the means to legitimate it, not its source.(25) In the Red Brigades this approach was taken further: a military command structure replaced democratic decision-making. Democracy was spoken of only in negative terms.

The anthropomorphic vision of capital and the State is the fourth element identified by Dalla Chiesa as a part of the political culture of '68 which was combined with others to produce red terrorism.(26) The identification of capital with the capitalist (often pictured with black hat and money bag), and of domination, with the dominators was part and parcel of a traditional communist propaganda, which was revived during the explosion of struggles in 1968-9. As Dalla Chiesa points out, this type of analysis was particularly contradictory since it combined a reductive economism (capitalism as the

'objective' operation of a set of laws), with 'conspiracy theory' in which Agnelli and Pirelli were seen to pull the wires of Italian capitalism. Instead of using Marxist theory to show that the capitalist was not personally responsible for a capitalism of which he himself was also a victim, power was identified with the powerful. Thus the term 'servi del padrone' ('bosses' lackeys') which was often used in in Red Brigade communiqués, whilst the detailing of the functions carried out by management personnel and State officials served to confirm their 'objective' guilt. The first targets of the Red Brigades tended to be figures with reputations for fascism or anti-unionism in the workplace, and rightwing judges hated within the extraparliamentary Left. Therefore their 'guilt' had a subjective dimension in that they had been over-zealous in carrying out their functions. However, the subsequent inclusion of known democrats as targets confirmed the 'objective' nature of the enemy.(27)

The political culture of '68 was contradictory on the question of the value of human life and the relationship between politics and morality. There was a wave of protest against injustice and inhumanity in the world; its targets were not only imperialist war, but the everyday exploitation in the factory which resulted in heavy casualties; (significantly, deaths through industrial 'accidents' were referred to as 'white murders' - 'omicidi bianchi'). At the same time, slogans and the 'oral culture' of the period expressed a desire for revenge, and a disdain for the value of the lives

of 'oppressors and exploiters'; a favourite quotation was Mao's saying: 'the death of a proletarian weighs heavily like a mountain, while that of a bourgeois weighs like a feather'. The killings of workers at Avola and Battipaglia in 1968-9 provoked mass revulsion and anger which were infused with these sentiments. What is particularly significant is that responses to exceptional events crystallised into widely-held opinions. The threshold of the acceptability of taking lives in revenge was lowered. This can be seen in the theorisation of political violence within the student movement, and subsequently within the extraparliamentary Left, but it was also an aspect of popular thinking. Workers had little time for worrying about the injuries suffered by foremen and managers at the hands of the so-called 'red handkerchiefs' at Fiat's; they were often jokingly referred to as 'industrial injuries'.(28)

The Red Brigades' disdain for the value of human life was, therefore, not peculiar to them. They took it a step further by purging such sentiments of their spontaneous and contingent character, and by making them the basis of an alternative ethic. The idea of the total autonomy of the proletariat from bourgeois morality coincided with a politics in which the ends justified the means.(29) In this schema lives became commodities to be exchanged; the act of pardon and the act of execution were to be judged only in terms of their political efficacy. However, the language of the Red Brigades' communiqués contain epithets that liken the victims

of their actions to animals ('pigs'). The term 'servi del padrone' is used to disenfranchise and to exclude from the human community those that are servile. A strong idea of morality, which owes much to the populist currents of 1960's Marxist-Leninism, prepares and justifies the elimination of 'class enemies'. This is bolstered with references to the Old Testament morality of 'an eye for an eye'.(30)

The exaltation of violence, the last element of the political culture of '68-9 under consideration, was intimately related to the other elements, but was the one which was crucial to the armed organisations that formed in the '70's. Political violence was propagated in the movements not only by the publications of writings by Fanon, Sartre and Latin American writers, but in leaflets, songs and images that accompanied social conflict.

The clashes of Valle Giulia were central to the mythology of the student movement, and the popularity of the song 'Violenza' celebrated a blood-thirsty vein in the 'class struggle' epic. Violence was not only accepted as unavoidable, but it was frequently considered to be baptismal and cathartic. Numerous slogans expressed these ideas. Yet, violence in the political culture of the movements was more a question of words than actions. Political violence was secondary to the movements - a by-product of mass picketing or street demonstrations, rather than a key form of action. Violence, moreover, was legitimated by its 'mass' character. Early Red Brigades' actions were often criticised for being 'elitist'.

'Sincere revolutionary vanguards' were criticised by Pirelli workers in 1972:

> 'because with the propaganda of terrorism they show that they have no faith in the masses, and in attempting to substitute them through exemplary actions, they can achieve nothing except to increase repression'.(31)

However, the line of demarcation was not always that clear. For example, at Pirelli a rank-and-file grouping - the Assemblea Operaia Unitaria (United Workers Assembly) - was divided in its response to the assassination, in May 1972 of Luigi Calabresi, who was thought to be guilty of murdering the anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli. Lotta Continua wrote: 'his death is an action in which the exploited can identify their desire for justice'.(32) Although the armed actions were criticised for their 'substitutionism', they earned respect for the fact that someone had dared to take up the gun and not just talk about it.

The Red Brigades began by exalting 'mass violence'. The first attacks on property, the threatening of managers and foremen, and even the kidnappings sought to imitate things that had been 'spontaneously' carried out by the workers' movement. The Red Brigades were attracted to those struggles that distinguished themselves by their violence - the resistance to evictions, internal marches in the factories and revolts in the South. They studied the moments in Italian history when workers resorted to arms.(33) In common with other currents of the extraparliamentary Left, they interpreted violence on the picket-line as positive; it was seen to display a consciousness that went beyond trade unionism and the 'revisionism' of the PCI. Violence signified not only illegality and the rejection of pacifist morals, but the assertion of an alternative, 'proletarian' idea of justice.

A particular incident that was frequently mentioned in early Red Brigades' documents, was the so-called 'pillorying' ('gogna') of fascists at Trento in 1970. It was held to embody classically 'proletarian justice' in action.(34)

The notion of creating 'proletarian justice' ('giustizia proletaria') was not widely propagated within the social movements of 1968-9. People showed preference for breaking rather than making laws. Its immediate roots were in Maoism (and its Stalinist antecedents); for example, the Cultural Revolution's trials and self-criticisms provided models. It was through the pursuit of 'people's justice', the implementation of which was in the hands of the 'armed party', that the Red Brigades shaped their conception of violent revolution. In doing so they moved away from the shared political culture of '68-9. The idea of political violence which had attracted the protagonists of the social movements was explosive, elemental and passionate - in brief, romantic. The use of violence was, however, considered one method of struggle among many. For the Red Brigades, by contrast, violence had a quite different status; it was the primary and determining form of struggle.(35) In this sense, the Red Brigades became a fully and exclusively terrorist organisation.

In part, the Red Brigades' conception of the primacy of violence was founded on a disdain for human life, but this served largely to lower the threshold of the acceptability of taking life. Nando Dalla Chiesa argues that the most

critical elements in the political culture of '68 which combined to make terrorism a legitimate form of action, were disdain for democracy, and ideologism. The military, vanguardist vision of the struggle for hegemony meant that politics could ultimately be superseded by force; ideological dogmatism not only facilitated the choice of armed struggle, but was its necessary condition of existence. It cemented the organisation together and excluded the possibility of other political choices.(36)

Dalla Chiesa's analysis is largely oriented to uncovering the roots of red terrorism in a diffuse political culture. He is careful to stress that it was not a simple relationship, but a contradictory one; he writes:

> 'conflict is the crucible in which the cultural mix (giving rise to terrorism) is realised, and yet it is also the most solid barrier against the transformation of those elements into a coherent political project. The decline and containment of conflict, the crushing supremacy of political over civil society, and the collapse of utopianism - all these serve to free those cultural elements ... the mass movements, because of their historical characteristics, are, therefore, simultaneously cradle and antidote (of terrorism).'(37)

Nonetheless, Dalla Chiesa overplays the elements of continuity. What remained contradictory and complex in the social movements was drastically transformed and simplified by the Red Brigades.

Luigi Manconi puts forward a similar analysis, but underlines the sharpness of the discontinuity. In particular, he argues that the decision to go into clandestinity was critical to the formation of all the terrorist organisations

in Italy; it was a ruptural point - a point of no return. It was, of course, a choice which was inspired by an ultra-vanguardist conception of political action (in the case of the Red Brigades it was arrived at after a heated debate in the Collettivo Politico Metropolitano, in which the majority condemned the idea of clandestinity, because it took power out of the hands of the 'masses'). However, once decided upon, clandestinity carried with it a whole set of consequences. It entailed a way of life that was, de facto, cut off from the everyday experiences of most people. The need for secrecy and for invisibility meant that activists had to hide their political views, and avoid open political discussions. Thus, they deprived themselves of the means of testing and verifying political hypotheses and projects by discussing them with those ('the working class') they purported to represent. Whilst other political organisations had to measure themselves in terms of the support and participation they were able to win, the Red Brigades were only indirectly subject to such pressures. The conditions of clandestinity functioned as the material support for the construction and elaboration of a version of 'reality' which did not allow refutation and questioning. It underpinned a logic which increasingly drove the Red Brigades to impose their 'reality', and to make the world conform to their view of it.(38)

The process whereby certain forms of political radicalism lead to regression is well described by Richard Sennett. In his Uses of Disorder he identifies in the search for a pure and conflict-free reality a pervasive tendency in contemporary culture.

> 'The enterprise is an attempt to build an identity or image that coheres, is unified and filters out threats in social experience ... The jarring elements can be purified out because they don't fit that articulated object, that self-consciously spelled-out set of beliefs, likes and dislikes, and abilities that one takes to be oneself ... fear involved in the identity process inhibits men from feeling themselves free historical beings ...'(39)

Sennett argues that this search for purity, which is typical of the adolescent phase in human life, involves making 'projections' designed to substitute for lived experience and to 'insulate in advance from experiences that might portend dislocation and disorder'.(40) Abstract and symbolic language and metaphors function to 'disembody situations'; 'if the ideologies ... seem dry and bloodless, it is perhaps because they rob men of the chance to care about something small enough to grasp'.(41) According to this analysis, the drive for 'purity of self' survives into an age that has put aside religion; it can be traced from the millenarian traditions through to modern revolutionary movements. But, for Sennett, it is a more general attitude in society, which informs the work of city planners and others who attempt to impose models of order, and expunge conflict from city life.

Sennett's analyses have some inadequacies (the model of identity formation tends to be ahistorical; generalisations from individual to social concepts of identity are too easily made), but they offer an interesting perspective in which to explore red terrorism. They draw attention to the deeply conservative impulses of those who repressed their own

freedoms in the name of Liberty. The life of clandestinity and military activity required the internalisation of codes of strict behaviour and a claustrobic morality.(42)

The Red Brigades spoke of their choice as one imposed by the system and as 'objectively' necessary, but the terrorist project is impossible to explain without linking the general cultural tendencies with the individual's or group's 'identity process'. The search for purity emerges from the Red Brigades' discourses as a unifying urge that precisely made that connection. The totalness of their opposition to the society in which they lived, paradoxically, made them into its prisoners, and they spoke a language which was a 'prisoner's language'.(43) Moreover, their actions, which were predicated on the idea that the social order was repressive and authoritarian, functioned to fulfill their prophesies. If red terrorism was partly a product of the social movements of 1968-9, it was also their antithesis, and a negation of their contradictory experiences.

The movements brought with them a rich cabaret of unexpected behaviour and experimentation, and an unleashing of individual energies; they were significant and innovatory precisely to the extent that they did not fit ideological schemas. Faced by their challenge, the Red Brigades turned away and looked for images conforming to their search for purity in their versions of the scriptures according to Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. The present and everyday realities, so central to social movements in the 1970's, were sacrificed on the altar of the past in the name of a future utopia in which society

would be a planned, harmonious whole without pain and disorder. History, fortunately, does not move in such ordered ways, and the crisis of the Red Brigades in the early 1980's marks the end of a peculiarly tragic attempt to 'make the ghosts of the past walk about again'.

FOOTNOTES: PART 5

Chapter 23

1. Alberto Melucci, 'New movements, terrorism and the political system', in Socialist Review, 56, 1981, p. 118.

2. For example, Roberto Mazzetti writes of terrorism as a simple extension of the extremist politics of 1968; Roberto Mazzetti, Genesi e sviluppo del terrorismo (Rome, 1979). For the opposite thesis, see Roberto Massari, Marxismo e critica del terrorismo (Rome, 1979).

3. Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse, che cosa hanno fatto, che cosa hanno detto e che cosa se no è detto (Milan, 1976), pp. 70-1.

4. Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse, pp. 63-5.

5. Vittorio Dini and Luigi Manconi, Il discorso delle armi (Milan, 1981), pp. 18-23.

6. Gruppo di compagni del consiglio di fabbrica, Le Lotte alla Pirelli (Milan, 1971), p. 18.

7. 'Terrorismo e quadro politico - tavola rotonda', in Mondoperaio, 4, 1978, pp. 7-9.

8. Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse, pp. 73-84.

9. Sinistra Proletaria, January 1971.

10. Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse, pp. 109-116.

11. Sinistra Proletaria, June 1970.

12. Ibid., p. 100.

13. Ibid., p. 83, p. 277.

14. V. Dini and L. Manconi, Il discorso delle armi, p. 37.

15. The Red Brigades liked to think of themselves as modern, scientific revolutionaries and not as Robin Hoods. Nonetheless, they were for a brief period popular heroes, who had many of the qualities of Eric Hobsbawm's bandits, and represented 'freedom, heroism and the dream of justice'; E. Hobsbawm, Bandits (1972), pp. 131-132.

16. V. Dini and L. Manconi, Il discorso delle armi, p. 28.

17. Quoted in Giorgio Galli, 'La politica italiana', in A. Gambino et al, Dal '68 a oggi (Milan, 1980), pp. 91-2.

18. Norbeto Bobbio, 'Democracy and Invisible Government' in Telos, 52, Summer 1982, pp. 54-5.

19. The GAP (Gruppo di Azione Partigiana) were founded by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, who was obsessed by the fear of a coup d'état. The organisation fell apart when Feltrinelli was killed in mysterious circumstances in March 1972.

20. Barrington Moore Jr., Injustice (London, 1978), pp. 398-433.

21. Quoted by V. Dini and L. Manconi, Il discorso delle armi, p. 9.

22. An important debate on terrorism took place in the period 1978-80 in the wake of the Moro assassination. This involved self-criticism and self-examination on the part of the post '68 New Left, as well as attempts to relate the growth of terrorism to 'objective' causes (e.g. the authoritarian tendencies within the Italian State). Among the most significant contributions are: L. Bonanate (Ed.), Dimensioni del terrorismo politico (Milan, 1979); A. Silj, 'Mai più senza fucile' (Florence, 1977); see also 'La sinistra tra terrorismo e restaurazione - materiali del convegno di Milano del 10-11 maggio', in Quotidiano dei Lavoratori - dossier-supplemento al n. 11 (29-5-80).
For discussion of the role of the press, see B. Lumley and P. Schlesinger, 'The Press, the State and its Enemies', in Sociological Review, 4, (November), 1982, pp. 603-626.

23. Nando Dalla Chiesa, 'Del sessantotto e del terrorismo: cultura e politica tra continuità e rottura', in Il Mulino, 273, (January-February) 1981, pp. 53-94.

24. Ibid., p. 73.

25. Ibid., p. 76.

26. Ibid., p. 78.

27. Giorgio Bocca, Il terrorismo italiano (Milan, 1978), pp. 102-103.

28. A series of interviews carried out with Fiat workers showed that they were either 'bloodthirsty' or indifferent in their opinions about terrorist victims. See M. Mantelli and Marco Revelli, Operai senza politica (Rome, 1978); and M. Cavallini, Terrorismo in fabbrica: interviste (Rome, 1978).

29. N. Dalla Chiesa, 'Del sessantotto e del terrorismo', pp. 80-3.

30. For an analysis of the language of Marxist-Leninism, see Patrizia Violi, I giornali dell'estrema sinistra (Milan, 1977), pp. 45-67.

31. Gruppi di compagni del consiglio di fabbrica, Le lotte alla Pirelli, pp. 38-9.

32. Luigi Bobbio, Lotta Continua: storia di una organizzazione rivoluzionaria (Rome, 1979), pp. 105-107.

33. Soccorso Rosso, Brigate Rosse, pp. 96-7.

34. Sinistra Proletaria, Foglio di Lotta, September 1970.

35. V. Dini and L. Manconi, Il discorso delle armi, p. 38.

36. N. Dalla Chiesa, 'Del sessantotto e del terrorismo', p. 84.

37. Ibid., pp. 91-2.

38. V. Dini and L. Manconi, Il discorso delle armi, pp. 41-2. For a fascinating fictional reconstruction of the clandestine life of Left-wing terrorists, see Luce D'Eramo, Nucleo Zero (Milan, 1981).

39. Richard Sennett, Uses of Disorder (London, 1971), p. 20.

40. Ibid., p. 27.

41. Ibid., p. 101.

42. Life inside the Red Brigades obliged women to adopt male codes of behaviour. Equality meant being as brave, disciplined and single-minded as the men. It meant getting rid of 'feminine' attitudes. Not surprisingly, women members were antagonistic towards the feminist movement, which they regarded as 'petit bourgeois'. See Ida Farè and Franca Spirito, Mara e le altre - le donne e la lotta armata: storie, interviste, riflessioni (Milan, 1979).

43. The term 'prisoner's language' is used by Richard Sennett to describe how sometimes oppressed groups adopt the terminology of their oppressors. Whilst this can serve the tactical function of establishing a group identity, he argues that it also means accepting the basic frame of reference of the dominant discourse, e.g. the appropriation of the identity 'deviant' simultaneously means accepting the frame of reference normal/abnormal. Terrorism exemplifies this in a particularly vivid way by assuming that violence is the motor-force of human history.

CHAPTER 24: YOUTH REVOLT AND THE MOVEMENT OF '77

Between 1975 and 1979 young people in the major Italian cities entered the political scene as the protagonists of new forms of urban conflict. They organised themselves into collectives and 'proletarian youth circles', squatted buildings and carried out 'autoreduction' of transport fares and cinema tickets. At the height of the movement in 1977, tens of thousands of young people were involved in mass protests and street battles with the police. Nothing like it had happened since the student movement of 1968. Like the mobilisations of '68, the youth revolt rejected the political mediation of parties and unions, to which it counterposed its own ideas of 'movement' and 'autonomy'. Nine years later, many of the ghosts of '68 came back to haunt the Italian political system. However, the 'movement of '77', as it was called, differed in many respects from its predecessor, and articulated new forms of urban disaffection.

The novelty of the new movement sprang from its assertion of a 'youth identity', which had been repressed or displaced in the student and worker politics of the late '60's and early '70's. But that identity was not perceived as involving values and practices exclusive to young people; rather, it was taken to be emblematic of a situation typical of the modern metropolis. Youth was made to signify 'exclusion', 'marginality', and 'deviance'. To be young and working class in a city like Milan in the late '70's meant living in the housing estates of the 'periphery' ('periferia') and making a living on the margins

of the labour market. In official discourses, this situation was described as a 'social problem' and a 'sickness' that needed to be cured (once, that is, young people began to protest). But, in the language of the movement, the identity associated with deviance and marginality was claimed and appropriated by its participants. The 'Metropolitan Indian', who wore war-paint and uttered transgressive chants, did not ask to be 'included'; s/he mocked Western 'civilisation' itself. The young unemployed asked not for jobs, but for the right to enjoy themselves.

The movement of '77 was almost as much a surprise to the New Left, which had grown out of the '68-9 movements, as it was to the traditional Left. Many of its assumptions about the 'workers' centrality' ('centralità operaia') and 'rational' political action were called in question. At the same time, the late '70's revolts were a complex mixture of elements. It could be said that they were pulled in opposite directions; on the one hand, by the politics represented by the women's movement (the 'creative' wing of autonomy), and by the politics of the armed struggle on the other (the organised 'military' version of autonomy). The 'emergent' and the 'residual', the 'alternative' and the 'oppositional' intersected, separated and conflicted at each moment of the movement's development.

Youth Protest in the Making

Youth politics developed in the 1970's out of a subcultural environment similar to that in which feminism

took root, but it was predominantly male. It was the libertarian and counter-cultural currents coming out of 1968, which incubated the ideas, and experimented in life styles that anticipated developments in the mid '70's. In Milan two reviews were particularly influential - Erba Voglio and Re Nudo, which were both set up in 1970. Their titles give a clue to their identities: Erba Voglio refers to the saying: 'The grass I want doesn't even grow in the king's garden', whilst Re Nudo refers to the story of the emperor who did not have any clothes; they affirm children's desire and knowledge in the face of authority. Both reviews opened themselves to the debates of the early feminist and gay movements. But Re Nudo was more important for the formation of a specifically youth politics. It had an extensive circulation (in the summer of 1971 it was reported to sell 8,000 copies in Milan alone), and promoted free pop concerts, which drew tens of thousands.(1) Re Nudo proclaimed: 'Proletarian youth of Europe Jimi Hendrix unites us'.(2) Its pages contained a mish-mash of American Underground drugs and 'peace-and-love' thinking, Reichian notions of sexual liberation and communist visions of cultural revolution. One of the gurus of the Italian Underground, Andrea Valcarenghi, summed up the hybrid ambition of this project as the hope that 'the Mao of Western Marxism will grow the long hair of American counter-culture'.(3) Strangely enough, this idea was not so far-fetched in the Italian context, and Re Nudo touched on critical themes that were taken up more widely in the mid '70's.

At its first national conference the Re Nudo collective could claim to have popularised three positive aspects of the Underground experience:

> 1) The organisation and generalisation of the struggle to reappropriate free time, which reached its height with the clashes at pop concerts in 1971-2, when the bosses of the music world were forced to reduce the price of tickets for young proletarians.
> 2) The creation of free, self-managed events and spaces, such as the festivals and counter-cultural centres.
> 3) The radical critique of the extraparliamentary Left's personal politics, and the recuperation of the themes of anti-authoritarian revolt from '68.(4)

When Re Nudo was first published, it addressed itself to a readership that was thought to be made up of 'petit bourgeois and students', but by June 1971 it was refering to a public of 'young proletarians'.(5) This term quickly entered into circulation. Although the organisations of the extraparliamentary Left consistently attacked Re Nudo for its 'remoteness from any form of organisation or relation to the workers', its insistence on the need for a politics of the 'inter-individual, the personal and the everyday' was often more appealing to working class youth than the sermonising of the Left.(6) Re Nudo had its finger on the pulse of an emergent politics, and addressed the problems of young males living in the big cities. And, in the process, Re Nudo had its share in precipitating the crisis of the neo-Leninist groups by articulating the dissatisfaction and frustration within them. Although feminists provided the most coherent critiques, the counterculturalists directed their fire at the moralism which underpinned the militants' sacrifice of the 'private' in the

name of the 'public'. The dissolution of this model of political activity was seen as a precondition for the opening up of politics to the lives of those excluded from its coded discourses. The experiences of '68 were the preserve of a relatively privileged minority, and were often a closed book to the next generation.

Youth had come to mean something quite different by the mid 1970's from what it had meant in the late '60's. Firstly, the distinction between the 'adult' world of regular waged labour and youth's transitional situation hardened; the absence of work (or work to match qualifications), and the prolonging of the educational process extended the period of being young of necessity rather than out of choice.(7) Then the divisions between working class youth and the traditionally middle or lower middle class student diminished due to the massive expansion of further education, and due to a convergence of their situations. Luigi Manconi and Marino Sinibaldi write:

> 'There is a dense network of connections and overlaps between the students' movement and sectors of the proletariat ... the strange figure of the student appears in the struggles of the door-to-door book-sellers, in the squats of empty buildings, and in the shape of unemployed intellectuals going to the labour exchange ... s/he appears likewise as the 'strange' worker with the diploma, or as the organised unemployed, who study in the 150 Hours scheme, or go to evening classes'.(8)

The youth movement that emerged in the mid '70's was a composite of young manual and white collar workers, and absentee students. In Milan, an in-depth study of two youth

circles showed that one out of five was a manual worker (clearly a minority), but that two-thirds were from manual working class families. The movement called itself a movement of 'young proletarians', unlike the student movement of 1968.(9) In one Milanese youth circle there was even a ban on the participation of non-proletarians because of a fear that outside intellectuals would impose their ideas.(10) However, the youth movement was a melting pot of social-cultural experimentation in which the notion of a 'separate' working class culture was in practice refuted. In this respect Re Nudo played an important role in introducing ideas from the American Underground, which had had no real place within Italian working class life, and in appropriating 'consumerism' for an oppositional politics.

The changes in the position of youth in the big cities and in their perception of their situation as a group, created a 'crisis of representation'. This was particularly acute in the case of the groups of the Extraparliamentary Left, which had been formed mainly through the recruitment of young workers and students. The youth movement did not invent a politics ex novo; for example, it adapted forms of political action such as squatting and autoreduction. Nonetheless, it gave these actions a different purpose and meaning. By examining the forms of action that the movement developed in the period 1975-8, it is possible to explore its specific characteristics.

Taking Over The City

Squatting was an important form of action for the movement. Squatting had spread in the mid '70's so that in February 1976 an estimated 1,500 units of public housing were occupied. Squats were not now restricted to housing but spread to premises useful as political and cultural centres. In other words, 'needs' were being defined in a broader sense than as the necessity of having a roof over one's head. This was particularly the case with the youth circles which started occupying buildings in Milan in early 1975, and had established about 50 social centres in the city by the end of 1977, involving about 2,000 hard core participants and 3-5,000 occasional participants.(11) A few houses were also occupied; a manifesto issued by a 'youth coordination group' declared:

> 'We want to live differently from families, and we want to avoid reproducing the same roles within the community relations ... we want to live how we choose'.(12)

This experiment was relatively isolated, as had been prior ones attempted by the Re Nudo collective. However, it expressed the desire for the transformation of personal relations and the winning of individual freedoms.

In the squats social relations were privileged as an end in themselves. Particular importance was attached to 'being together' ('stare insieme'), and to the exploration of interpersonal dynamics through consciousness-raising. Most activities were pleasure-oriented, with a special emphasis on active participation and 'creativity'. In the absence of

municipal provision, photographic and music workshops, yoga classes etc. assumed 'alternativist' connotations. The very act of taking over a building and the process of self-management developed political attitudes.

Although most of the squats were peaceful, some involved ongoing battles with the police, and the threat of eviction hung over them all. The dangers were also internal to the youth circles in that heroin addiction in the big metropolises grew into a major social problem among the young. Propaganda campaigns through the circles' papers and the provision of help and counselling became a central activity of many centres in their desperate attempt to substitute and counteract the repressive measures taken by the authorities against addicts.(13) Social problems were, therefore, continually being defined as political and as terrains of conflict.

Although the social centres of the youth circles were independent of one another, there was a sense of belonging to a movement, and sharing common goals. The movement's project was to create a

> 'different, non-violent and non-competitive politics, which breaks with the cult of leadership and seeks to build egalitarian relations between men and women comrades'.(14)

This alternative sociality was celebrated in pop festivals, such as those held under the aegis of Re Nudo at the Parco Lambro in Milan. In 1976 the youth circles of Milan organised a Festival of the Spring, which claimed to revive the pagan

and popular tradition of celebrating the 'rebirth of life, renewal and the wish to fulfill needs and desires'. This was a tradition that, it was claimed, 'bourgeois civilisation' had destroyed in the name of the work ethic. The festival's theme was 'let's take control of our lives' ('riprendiamoci la vita'); it was part-carnival and part-pop concert, plus a lot of eating, drinking, dancing and smoking 'dope'.(15)

These festivals and events were expressions of a revolt against the 'ideology of crisis' and the programme of auterity, propounded by both the government and the Communist Party, which had entailed a reduction in feast-day holidays. The themes of the refusal of work, the reduction of working hours and the demand for immediate gratifications drew together the disparate forces of counter-culturalism and 1970's versions of 'operaism'. Although there remained serious differences between these currents on the means and types of action required to develop the movement, they shared a common rejection of the ideology according to which 'labour is the fundamental value in social life and in progress'.(16)

This attitude to work was not restricted to theoretical disquisitions; during the enactment of a job-creation scheme for youth in Milan in 1977, eight out of ten job offers were turned down by applicants.(17) What was anxiously debated in the press as 'disaffection from work' could be explained by a number of factors - the growing disparity between the qualifications of the job applicants and the jobs on offer, the preference of some for a life of petty crime or casual

working (what was known as the 'art of getting by' - 'arte d'arrangiarsi') and so on.[18] However, individual choices were made in the context of a movement of 'young proletarians' which did not ask to enter the 'adult world' of work, or call for the right to work.

The youth movement in Italy developed forms of action (or inaction) which had little to do with the world of work, or were 'anti-work'. Its writings celebrated absenteeism, non-cooperation, sabotage and wildcat strikes as the expressions of workers' desire for communism, which was defined as the 'abolition of waged work'.[19] It was around consumption and leisure activities that the movement of the 'young proletarians' developed its specific struggles and collective identity.

The autoreduction of tickets at pop concerts had already been practiced 'spontaneously' in Milan at the beginning of the 1970's. In September 1977, at a Santana concert in Milan, the practice had become formalised; youth circles assured the organisers that the event would not be disrupted in exchange for a price reduction.[20] Earlier, in October 1976, youth circles launched a campaign to force cinemas to reduce ticket prices. A leaflet of the youth circles of zona Venezia declared:

> 'The defence of the living conditions of the masses also means establishing a right to a life composed not just of work and the home, but of culture, amusement and recreation'.

The struggle was, it went on, against the monopolies of film distribution and the screening of 'fascist, anti-feminist and qualunquista' films.(21) In Milan about half of the cinemas were concentrated in the centre, and these were in the luxury category, whilst the cheaply priced cinemas of the periphery had all but disappeared. In support of their demands for municipal control of cinemas, backing for youth circle cinemas and an immediate low flat-rate for all tickets, the circles issued tickets themselves. Seven cinemas were hit by the 'autoreductions', but the campaign failed to gain concessions. The president of the Cultural Commission of the Comune accused the movement of

> 'favouring irrational, individual rebellion that only divides citizens ... (and of) wanting everything at once, even what it is wrong to want, grabbing at whatever is at hand on board a ship that is sinking'.(22)

However, the very obdurateness of this response confirmed and publicly underlined the exclusion that was being protested against.

Civil disobedience was at the heart of youth protest. Rule-breaking and the disruption of the routines of city life were practised almost as an art-form. Class-room misbehaviour was translated into street politics, and authority in all its guises was held up to ridicule or humorous banter. As Piven and Cloward have observed, disruption is the only resource of poor people's movements, and working class youth had few other means of protest than disturbing the life of the metropolis.(23) Yet it was more

than a last resort. It was a means of expression and a source of entertainment, unlike the politics offered by the political parties and unions. The slogans of the movement of '77, which were notable for their irony and wit, illuminate this dimension of youth protest.

Umberto Eco commented on the change in semiotic strategies of the movement, contrasting how slogans were formulated by students and by workers:

> 'At a recent demonstration the students chanted: 'Gui and Tanassi are innocent, the students are delinquents.' The irony and the provocation were clear. Immediately afterwards a group of workers took up the slogan to demonstrate their solidarity. But they translated it into their own model of intelligibility: 'Gui and Tanassi are delinquents, the students are innocent' ... It was not because they were incapable of understanding the irony, but because they do not recognise it as a means of political expression'.(24)

Experimentation with slogans was part of a counter-culture of 'transversality'. It worked with the inherited wisdoms of the Left in order to turn them on their heads. The Communist Party was a favourite target. Its thunderings against the 'new irrationalism' and its 'plague-bearers' ('untorelli') were taken up in a complex battle of signs. The Volsci of Rome wrote of themselves in their paper:

> 'We are adorers and worshippers of the P38 gun , we are henchmen and abetters of terrorism, we are pre-political, unruly barbarians, and we are the so-called delirious and desperate adventurists'.(25)

Other slogans ironised about the repression of the movement:

> 'A hundred policemen for every faculty; send the whole army to university. (Cento poliziotti in ogni facoltà, tutto l'esercito all'università.)
>
> Lama star, Lama star, we want to make sacrifices. (Lama star, Lama star, i sacrifici vogliamo far (to the tune of Jesus Christ Superstar).)
>
> Free radios are a provocation. All power to the television. (Le radio libere sono provocazione: tutto il potere alla televisione.)'(26)

For the so-called 'creative' wing of the movement of '77, words were a vital component in the struggle against the power to define exercised by those in positions of authority. Through the 'free radios' activists attempted to let the voices in the streets speak over the air.

'Free radio' were set up all over Italy in the wake of a constitutional court ruling, which declared that the state monopoly of the air-waves was illegal. That decision was made in July 1975; within a year some 800 stations were broadcasting.(27) The majority of these were purely commercial ventures, but in the context of the social upheaval, radio played a significant role as the sounding board and cultural laboratory of the new movements. It seemed that Brecht's notes on the socialist potentialities of radio, which were the guiding inspiration of the Italian enthusiasts, could be put into practice. Radio would, according to this vision, deal with ordinary people's rich store of experiences, and address the 'real life' problems which the media tended to ignore. It would be opened to contributions by

non-professionals.[28] Most importantly of all, the technology was thought to contain the possibilities for making every receiver into a transmitter, and therefore of replacing the vertical, hierarchical communications system with an egalitarian, horizontal flow of messages. Unlike the situation in 1968-9, when the social movements had a largely negative attitude to modern media, in the late '70's they used the radio.[29]

Radio Alice in Bologna, or Radio Popolare in Milan, did indeed establish a relationship with the audience which was radically different from the normal one. John Downing compares the different function of the 'phone-in' for alternative and dominant radio:

> 'The bourgeois stations generally have a delay-device to put people's voices on the air some seconds after they have actually spoken ... it enables quite effective censorship ... Furthermore, phone-ins are cast very often in the form of interviews with the linkperson. Thus, as a member of the Bologna A/Oblique Collective once put it, they become like a crossword where the person who phones in is faced with something resembling numbered blank squares which have to be filled in with the single correct answer ... By contrast, from a revolutionary radio perspective, the telephone means that a studio is not essential for public debate. It means immediacy, the most dramatic case being that of Radio Alice during the Bologna insurrection ... People can read poetry over the air, sing songs and sometimes speak from workplaces.'[30]

However, the 'free radio' movement had many inadequacies. Apart from having to cope with financial difficulties and state repression, the weakness of a perspective so rooted in

ideas of the authenticity and immediacy of the radio experience revealed itself when the mass mobilisations subsided. The new approach made radio more accessible to social groups who would otherwise have been deprived of the means with which to communicate to a large audience: special programmes were compiled by and for women, there were young people's phone-in slots, and workers in dispute were able to explain their case. Yet, the stations grossly underestimated the importance of developing specific cultural and communicational skills, and of exploring the medium rather than trying to 'reflect the reality of the real world'. Programmes that started off as exciting quickly became routine and boring.(31)

The free radios' failure to articulate and develop autonomous practices needs to be related to the nature of sub- and counter-cultures in Italy in the mid '70's. Radios could not, of course, create what did not exist in their environment. And that environment in Italy was dominated by a highly politicised subculture, which had arisen in the wake of 1968. This can be highlighted by comparing it to the British situation in the same period. While in Britain youth protest was primarily expressed through music, dress and a reworking of youth subcultural forms ('punk' was its most dramatic manifestation), in Italy a youth subculture had to be invented out of the raw materials of a political subculture (versions of 'autonomy').(32) In the latter, cultural spaces and activities were quickly consumed by the pressures of political action. In the Italian context 'alternative' practices were invariably 'oppositional' and

politicised. The historical intolerance of the Italian state and the vitality of the oppositional political subculture tended to narrow down the range of possible forms of conflict. The theatre of violence imposed its rules on the actors of the social movements.

Two Societies?

Elements of violence were present in the youth movement from an early stage because of its adoption of direct action methods such as squatting and autoreduction, which involved clashes with the police. But the violence remained accidental, sporadic and largely defensive, and the primary concern of movement participants was for peaceful personal and cultural transformation. However, in 1977 the situation changed; a vicious spiral of political violence and repression divided and undermined the movement.

Bianca Beccalli has analysed the process in terms of the blockage of the local political system;(33) the Left wing 'Junta', elected to govern Milan in 1975, was consistently hostile to the demands of the youth movement. They were identified with extraparliamentarism, and were not, therefore, considered to be legitimate. Furthermore, local government found it difficult to deal with issues such as heroin-addiction, which involved questions of principle, and which needed to be referred upwards to national party leaderships. Consequently, the movement was defined as 'irrational' and incapable of dialogue. It was first ignored, and then repressed.

The justification by the Communist mayor of Bologna of the killing of Franco Lo Russo (during a demonstration in March 1977) was the most dramatic instance of the total breakdown of communication between the movement and the local institutions. The effect on the movement was to drive it into a confrontationalist politics; this resulted in the growth of credibility and influence of the 'hardliners' of the so-called Organised Autonomy ('Autonomia Organizzata'), who saw violence against persons and property as the primary means of escalating conflict. This strategy gave them the power to set the agenda for the discussions of the movement by simply imposing them. The problems of military strategy, 'political line' and state repression were made into the key issues.(34) A new version of the neo-Leninist politics, against which the youth and feminist movements had struggled, asserted itself.

The movement's space for manoeuvre was cut away. The refusal of local government to grant financial aid to the social centres, and to make reforms taking account of demands from below, meant that many projects collapsed, or ended up as little more than the 'self-management of misery'. Centres were abandonned and the campaign against heroin addiction given up. Those in the movement were presented with the stark choice of either withdrawing into private life, or of supporting the politics of the armed organisations.

The crisis of the movement has been graphically described:

> 'A monumental political immobility today fires the desperate flight into the gothic landscape of urban terrorism, leading in turn to a further retrenchment over law and order and the defence of the state institutions ... The symbolic dissolution of

> the 'extraparliamentary' left group Lotta Continua on the thorn of feminism; the scattering of the student movement that had briefly survived around the issue of state repression in 1977; the subsequent exodus into the innumerable niches of the 'private' seem to nail inherited politics to an increasingly narrow horizon. Elsewhere, a narcissism, which is incipient to much intellectual activity morbidly fixes itself with its own doomed stare. Critical activity is frequently plunged into a cul-de-sac of perpetual mourning, stretched across the abyss between a world that has been lost and a future which refuse to arrive.'(35)

It was a crisis which imploded within the forms of youth protest. But it was also generalised throughout the oppositional social movements, which were subjected to the same doom-laden atmosphere. Between the politics of terrorism and of state repression, there was little space for social movements. For thousands, the journey, which began in 1968-9, ended a decade later inside, or in the shadow of, prison-walls. The 'defeat' of the movement of '77 marked the end of a historical phase of mass mobilisations which began in 1968. The 'residual' politics of terrorism triumphed over the 'emergent' forms. Terrorism represented a particular historical cul-de-sac, but it illuminated a more general crisis of oppositional politics. It was a crisis of a particular model of political action. Alberto Melucci has written:

> 'This situation has been interpreted almost exclusively in terms of 'riflusso' ... But I believe that ... it was only a certain politics which prevented important transformations ... To continue to evaluate these phenomenon negatively on the basis of a party-organisation model means not to understand the changes going on.'(36)

In 1968-9 the unions and subsequently, the Communist Party adapted themselves in order to represent the new oppositional forces in society. The challenge from the 'New Left' revitalised and renewed the 'Old Left'. However, in 1977 their hegemony was seriously called in question. It seemed that a historic shift was taking place to which the new social movements drew attention.

Alberto Asor Rosa, first a founding father of the Italian 'operaism', and then a leading Communist Party intellectual, wrote one of the most controversial commentaries on the crisis in progress. In 1977, his 'Two Societies' articles claimed that a new social reality had grown up outside the universe of organised labour:

> 'Between these two realities - the organised working class and marginalised, unemployed youth - there is a deep divide. This appears in their behaviour, political choices and forms of organisation in the Italian and, perhaps, in the European situation'.(37)

For Asor Rosa:

> 'Between the system and the forces of student agitation there stand only the unions and the PCI, which represent the first society - the organised and productive one ... they are the only institutions commanding respect in the whole republican state'.(38)

While he insists that the idea of the 'Two Societies' is metaphorical, Asor Rosa gives a striking picture of a world in which the traditional forces of opposition are in the position of defending the Republic from an unknown threat. The movement of '77 in Rome, which prevented Luciano Lama,

the secretary general of the CGIL, from addressing a rally at the university, was a sign of the times. It was seen, at the time, as an extraordinarily symbolic moment. Unlike the students of '68,who engaged in dialogue with leading trade unionists, there was no language of politics common to Luciano Lama ('Lama non l'ama nessuno') and the Metropolitan Indians. It was this incident which provoked Asor Rosa's article.

Asor Rosa's concern in writing about the failure of the workers' organisations to represent the 'non-garantiti' (the 'second society' which was not protected by the State, or by trade unions) was that they should extend their area of influence to all forces in society. His aim was to reconstruct the bridges between the social groups, as had been done in the wake of '68; this meant by playing the role of the critical intellectual who connected up the different cultures.

> 'The pressing problem today consists in asking if and what relationship can exist between the culture which is the expression of the working class, and the culture which essentially wants to 'represent' the crisis of the system ... I am convinced that the workers' culture can comprehend the culture of crisis - just as the working class is able to comprehend ('com-prendere') - hold within itself the rebel, the marginal, the a-social, who are part of its past and who have been its archetypal figures, even though this might have been forgotten.'(39)

For Asor Rosa,the 'dissident' Italian and French intellectuals, who saw the 'marginals" refusal to be integrated as a new form of politics, were simply re-editing a version of 'third worldism'; they were identifying any group which fell

outside the mechanisms of reproduction of the system as positive: in the '60's, it would have been the Vietnamese; in the late '70's, it was the impoverished student. Asor Rosa maintained that the workers' movement needed to absorb these elements just as it had done in the past.

Asor Rosa's response to the movement of '77 was more intelligent that than of other intellectuals and politicians on the Left, whose analyses underpinned a repressive and moralising politics. However, its axioms were not very different. For him, the problem was to assert the 'centrality' of the industrial working class, and to cast the mantle of Communist Party hegemony over all the forces of opposition within society. The 'infantile', regressive and intellectualistic forms of rebellion had been historically superseded by the disciplined ranks of the workers' party, and this process had to be repeated in modern conditions. Opposition needed to be channelled and educated into assuming the responsibilities of government. Social conflict had to be made political - to be made functional to the assumption of power. The inadequacies of this approach derived from the fact that it ignored shifts in how politics was being redefined in the 1970's, and assumed that past practices could be simply adjusted rather than fundamentally rethought.(40)

The dissident intellectuals cited by Asor Rosa (in particular, he had in mind Toni Negri and the 'representatives' of the 'area of <u>autonomia</u>') had their short-comings;(41) Negri, for example, was especially prone to romanticise the

new '*operaio sociale*', whom he greeted as the successor to the 'mass-worker' as the vanguard of the new social struggles.(42) Nevertheless, they grappled with real issues and confronted the change in the nature of social conflicts.

Massimo Paci writes of the new situation:

> 'The deep changes in the economic and political spheres of advanced capitalist society have shifted the focus of conflict from the directly productive sphere, reorganising the role of the working class as the principal agent of class conflict. This process, according to numerous analyses, seems to be accompanied by a particularisation or fragmentation of conflict. This conflict, even though spreading from the strictly economic to the political and socio-cultural, loses the characteristics of unity and global dimensions found in traditional class struggle. It is sectoralised and fragmented. At the moment in which conflict seems to be becoming endemic, it seems to lose its capacity to undermine the hierarchy of the social structure.'(43)

What Asor Rosa was attempting to do was to make the new order of conflicts conform to an older model. The tragic demise of the youth movement gave this project a certain *raison d'être*, given the comparative solidity of the older political forms. But its great weakness lay in denying the importance of the autonomy and innovation brought into being by the social movements in the struggle over new social identities. This was most evident in relation to the feminist movement, which came to represent a new politics in its most radical form.

FOOTNOTES: PART 5

Chapter 24

1. Lotta Continua, 'Per il movimento degli studenti medi' - convegno di Pavia, 1971, p. 11.

2. Re Nudo, 19, 1973.

3. Andrea Valcarenghi, Underground a pugno chiuso (Rome, 1974).

4. Re Nudo, 21, 1973.

5. Re Nudo, June-August 1971.

6. Lotta Continua, 'Per il movimento degli studenti medi', pp. 10-12.

7. Bianca Beccalli, 'Protesta giovanile e opposizione politica', in Quaderni Piacentini, 64, 1977, pp. 53-67.

8. L. Manconi and M. Sinibaldi, 'Un strano movimento di strani studenti', in Ombre Rosse, 20 (March) 1977, p. 16. Romano Alquati, 'Per un'analisi della composizione di classe degli studenti', in Aut Aut, 154 (July-August) 1976.

9. B. Beccalli, The Youth Movement and Public Policy in Milan 1975-79, mimeograph, Centre for European Studies, Harvard University, pp. 3-5.

10. Sarà un risotto che vi seppellirà - materiali dei circoli proletari giovanili di Milano (Milan, 1977), p. 23.

11. B. Beccalli, The Youth Movement, p. 3; see also Claudia Sorlini (Ed.), Centri sociali autogestiti e circoli giovanili (Milan, 1978), pp. 45-78.

12. Sarà un risotto, pp. 39-40.

13. For the politics of hard drugs in Italy, see Giancorlo Arnao, Rapporto sulle droghe (Milan, 1976).

14. Sarà un risotto, p. 40.

15. Ibid., pp. 30-2.

16. A. Accornero, Il lavoro come ideologia, p. 39.

17. B. Beccalli, 'Classe operaia e nuovi movimenti collettivi' in G. Germani, Mutamento e classi sociali in Italia (Naples, 1981), p. 56.

18. Nino Vento, 'I giovani proletari, l'ideologia, il tempo libero' in Ombre Rosse, July 1976, p. 25.

19. Sarà un risotto, pp. 119-140. The influence of 'operaist' ideas was considerable, that is, of the 'operaist' currents associated with Potere Operaio and ex-Potere Operaio intellectuals (Toni Negri, Sergio Bologna and others). Christian Marazzi has observed: 'What the Bolognesi call 'marginality at the center' is precisely a critique of all attempts to subordinate this invention - force, that is, the creativity and productivity, of the struggle and life-styles developed by the so-called 'marginals' ... This brings us back to the central theme of Autonomy: the struggle against work, the refusal of work. Ever since its early formulations, which date back to Mario Tronti's writings of 1964, the Italian revolutionary movement has been moving toward the refusal of work as a positive productive force of capitalist development. Refusal of work, demand for more money and less work, struggle against harmful work ... has always meant forcing capital to develop to the maximum its productive forces ... Only when 'non-worker's labor' becomes a generalised reality and enjoying life a productive fact in itself, does freedom from exploitation become not only possible but materially achievable'; Christian Marazzi and Sylvere Lotringer, 'The Return of Politics', in Semiotext(e), 3, 1980, pp. 15-6.

20. Corriere della Sera (15-9-77).

21. R. Sodi, 'Pagiamo il 'nostro biglietto'', in Realismo, 15, (March) 1977, pp. 28-31. 'Qualunquista' is a term used to refer to a 'couldn't-care-less' attitude to politics with Right wing undertones.

22. Ibid., pp. 30-1.

23. F. Piven and R. Cloward, Poor People's Movements, p. 25.

24. Quoted in Meagan Morris, 'Eurocommunism vs semiological delinquency' in M. Morris (Ed.), Language, Sexuality and Subversion (Darlington, Australia, 1978), pp. 66-8.

25. I Volsci, February, 1978.

26. Red Notes, Italy: 1977-78 - 'Living with the Earthquake' (London, 1978), p. 58.

27. Mark Grimshaw and Carl Gardner,''Free Radio' in Italy', in Wedge, 1, (Summer), pp. 14-6.

28. Bertolt Brecht, Ecrits sur la littérature et l'art 1 - Sur le cinéma (Paris, 1970), pp. 127-135.

29. See Hans Magnus Enzensberger, 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media', pp. 108-115.

30. John Downing, The Media Machine (London, 1980), pp. 207-208.

31. Biagio Longo, 'Fuochi fatui? La resistenza delle radio libere', in Quaderni Il Lavoro dell'Informazione, 1, 1981, pp. 103-119.

32. Bianca Beccalli explains the peculiar lateness of the emergence of a 'youth movement' in Italy in socio-economic terms. Her account is typical in its refusal to grant cultural developments any specificity. See B. Beccalli, 'Protesta giovanile e opposizione politica'. For a cultural approach to youth subcultures, see Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, Resistance through Rituals (London, 1977).

33. B. Beccalli, 'The Youth Movement and Public Policy in Milan', pp. 10-3.

34. L. Manconi and M. Sinibaldi, 'Un strano movimento', pp. 18-21.

35. Ian Chambers and Lidia Curti, 'Silent Frontiers', in Screen Education, 41 (Winter-Spring) 1982, p. 28.

36. Alberto Melucci, L'invenzione del presente, pp. 163-165.

37. The articles were first published in Rinascità and then in book form. Alberto Asor Rosa, Le Due Società (Turin, 1977), p. VII.

38. Ibid., p. 66.

39. Ibid., pp. 103-104.

40. This conception, which was also deeply embedded in how the history of working people was written, is described by Federico Bozzini and Maurizio Carbognin: 'In the culture of the historical Left, the only human element worthy of history are organised social groups. Outside the union and the party there is no salvation, there is no politics and so there's no history. Thus, a point is arrived at, whereby collective demands are hypostatised, and need is defined only in terms of what can be mediated through the ... activities of organisations'; Perchè parlare di storia, p. 10.

41. It is significant that the arena of political debate in 1977 was dominated by theorists who had shared a political and cultural trajectory in the 1960's.

42. Toni Negri, Dall'operaio massa all'operaio sociale, pp. 147-164.

43. Massimo Paci, 'Vecchi e nuovi conflitti sociali', in Ombre Rosse, 31, (February) 1980, p. 32.

CHAPTER 25: FEMINISM AND A NEW POLITICS

When Marx wrote that 'Men make their own history ... but they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves' he was no doubt referring to Man as a universal category. However, it is a word that is also revealing of the hegemony of men in the public sphere. Women, it could be said, make history under circumstances which are largely 'man-made'. Certainly, the language of Politics has historically been fashioned in male terms. The social movements of 1968-9 are no exceptions to this. As has been seen, women were active participants, but they acted as 'students' and 'workers', and seldom as 'women students' and 'women workers'. Their experience of the strikes and occupations, of the open meetings and demonstrations, were, therefore, contradictory, at least in retrospect; it is from the frictions emerging from the persistence of old roles and invention of new ones that a women's movement developed in Italy during the 1970's.(1)

The student movement, which was probably especially significant for the formation of feminism, was lived by many women activists as a great release from stifling social conventions. Parental pressures and institutional tutelage bore down heavily on women students, who were glad to escape from them through solidarity with their peer group. The social movement expressed their anger at injustices, and provided a vehicle for creating alternative ways of living. It entailed the learning of new skills, meeting people, and discovering a whole world through discussion and reading. At the same time, there were limits put on how the freedoms could be used, and

channels tended to direct the energies of women students in particular ways. For example, the assignment to women of secretarial functions was so blatant that this role was widely dubbed the 'angelo del ciclostile' (the roneo angel). The process of social mobilisation in many respects changed women's positions in relation to their male peers, but the change was for the most part slight, and required a conformity to pre-existing notions of comradeship.

However, it was this change of situation and the assertion of ideas to do with equality and freedom which made long tolerated injustices intolerable. To duplicate hundreds of leaflets at the behest of some student leader or political militant seemed, suddenly, to be a form of complicity in the hypocrisy of those who claimed to be communists.(2)

Barrington Moore's general observations concerning a sense of moral outrage and injustice offer some insights into the consciousness of discrimination and inequality which developed among some of the women in the student movement.(4) Feminist anger and criticism were directed first of all against male student activists, who were seen to reproduce dominant values, even though they claimed to stand for something different. The 'salesmen of the new inevitability', who did so much to explode the justifications of the dominant group in society, and who provided alternative standards with which to make political judgements, conjured up disaffection from within the movement they led. Their instruments of analysis were turned against them. However, the women's movement was not a simple development of tendencies within the preceding social movements. During the 1970's feminists wrestled

with a legacy of which they were a part, but from which they increasingly sought to escape.

The aim of this chapter is to trace some of the routes taken by feminists which led out of the 1968-9 experience. Perhaps more so in Italy than in other countries, the women's movement after 1968 was divided along political lines. Women tended to become feminists after they had already been activists on the Left, and the differences within the wider political field were echoed within the movement. In the first section, some of the major tendencies among the pioneering feminists are briefly outlined. The purpose of this is to show how the movement began as a struggle to create a new politics out of an old one; this was a process internal to the experience of that generation. The next section deals with the growth of the mass movement around the abortion issue, and how feminism established its presence in a number of spheres, including the unions and workplaces. However, the women's movement, as the final section argues, remained marginal and antagonistic to the dominant forms of politics on the Left. So, when the latter was in disarray at the end of the decade, feminism seemed to represent a potentially alternative politics.

Pioneering Years

The idea of women's equality was not invented by the '68 generation; it already had a respectable history as part of the more general struggle for democratic and civil liberties led by the Socialist and Communist Parties. According to the emancipation thesis, writes Lesley Caldwell,

> 'the process of women's emancipation is similar to that claimed for men, i.e. that participation is work, political life and social relations outside the home produces a series of effects which are positive and generally unproblematic'.

This meant extending women's activities without that changing their central role in the traditional family structure. Togliatti's address at the founding conference of the Unione della Donne Italiane (UDI) in 1945 still provided the basic guidelines for policy on the family;

> 'We do not want communist women to distance themselves from their everyday lives, or to renounce what I understand to be their duties ... Nor that they should in any way lose the attributes and graces of their femininity.'(5)

In other words, the emancipationist approach of the traditional Left tended to require women to fit into male-dominated party structures and policies, and to overlook the structural inequalities flowing from the sexual divisions of labour in the home and at work. It was this conservatism and institutionalis which feminists rebelled against, just as the student movement had done in the late '60's.

Carla Ravaioli recalls an incident which brought the new feminism and the emancipationists into head-on confrontation. At a conference in June 1970 on 'Women and the Choices Facing Italian Society in the 1970's', she writes that

> 'a woman's voice aggressive and scandalously out of keeping with the calibrated decorum of the debate broke in : 'My name is of no importance. I belong to the movement Rivolta Femminile ... Over these days I have heard words like 'inclusion', 'participation', 'integration' ... It appears to me that

> what you want is exactly what already exists ... For you, this culture is fine. The only thing that you ask is that women be part of it. The women you want are exactly the duplicates of men.'(6)

The attempt to bring women into the orbit of the institutions, without radically changing those institutions, was totally rejected by the early feminists, who worked to create a social movement in opposition to them. The defiance and the language of revolt learnt in the social movements clashed with the procedures and style of a parliamentary politics. Yet, the need to act autonomously had arisen because of the failure of the movements to take up women's specific grievances and aspirations.

A statement by the De Mau group (Il Gruppo Demistificazione Autoritarismo), which was founded in Milan in 1966, observed:

> 'It is quite absurd at a time like this which is characterised by many radical struggles among young people against authoritarianism, alienation and the division of labour, that no qualitative leap is being made towards an analysis ... that discusses the position of men and women in relation to the division of labour and the rigid fixing of social roles ... You really have to ask why the anti-authoritarian movements don't put this at the very centre of their struggles but instead remain locked into the mystique of 'the political struggle' ... It seems that they are too involved in the male logic of the old culture they claim to be attacking.'(7)

The De Mau group was shortlived, but it was important in setting up one of the first women's study groups: it looked at the family as an institution which reproduced relations of dominance and subordination, adapting some of the theories of

Reich, Marcuse and the Frankfurt School, and asserting the need for women 'to define themselves', instead of seeking integration into the dominant culture. They anticipated developments which led to the foundation of autonomous women's organisations in 1970.

The setting up of formal organisations in the wake of the social movements (Rivolta Femminile and Movimento delle Donne Italiane (MLD) in 1970, and Lotta Feminista in 1971-2) can partly be seen as a response parallel to that which led to the formation of many political groups at the time. Without the favourable conditions of mass mobilisation, when small, informal collectives could be formed in workplaces and universities, a degree of formalisation was necessary. However, the response was even more a reaction to the rise of a neo-Leninism which seemed to re-instate authoritarian models. The feminist pioneers saw themselves as developing the anti-authoritarian politics of '68 and rekindling the 'movementist' spirit. Thus the organisations they set up were very different in structure and mode of operation from the others.

Lesley Caldwell has written that the earliest groups, until 1973-4, concentrated on the importance of the small group which practiced consciousness-raising;

> 'they attempted to confront the internal dynamics of what happens when groups of women meet together, i.e. a concentration on work within the group at a series of different levels ... So that a politics of the personal, of sexuality, of the body was organised around the possibility/ feasibility of beginning to live differently now and of according some weight to the specificity of the relational aspects of masculinity and femininity.'(8)

It would be wrong to try to put all the various experiments in feminism into organisational boxes. In cities like Milan there were complex webs of relationships, which owed their existence to shared experiences of the social movements - from the acquaintance of 'comrades' to close friendships. These facilitated contacts, meetings and so on. It was seldom a question of membership, as with the extraparliamentary groups, but rather a participation in intersecting circles and networks. Often a meeting place, such as the women's centre in via Cerubini in Milan, acted as a focal point where discussion would be combined with the search for new forms of sociality. Nonetheless, in the context of an intensely political subculture, tendencies were identified with organisations. One of the first to consistently discuss the issue of female sexuality was Rivolta Femminile.

The Manifesto of Rivolta Femminile, published in July 1970, is one of the key founding documents of the Italian women's movement. It was uncompromising about the need for autonomy at a time when other organisations, such as MLD, were still open to men. It starts:

> 'Woman must not be defined in relation to man. On this awareness is based equally our struggle and our freedom. Man is not the model to be aspired to in women's process of self-discovery ... Equality is an ideological attempt to enslave women at a higher level.'(9)

It denounces marriage as an institution of male domination, and declares feminism to be the 'first political moment of

historical critique of the family and society'. Unpaid domestic labour is identified as the work which allows private and state capitalism to survive. Male control of women's sexuality is rejected in the name of a 'free sexuality in all its forms', and the 'right of all children to sexual games'. But the target of attack is not only the dominant ideology and institutions, but Marxism itself.

The importance of Rivolta Femminile lay in its pursuit of women's liberation through a return to the domain of the private, subjective and personal as a means of exposing the mechanisms of domination operating in society. Freedom and difference are counterposed to the idea of equality. The problems of sexuality and the family were made central. Carla Lonzi, a leading writer in Rivolta Femminile, developed a theory relating sexual behaviour and forms of domination. She denounced the idea that sexual satisfaction could only, or primarily, be derived from penetration of the vagina, and canvassed stimulation of the clitoris as a way of freeing women's pleasures from men's control.(10) Demands for contraception and abortion were framed in terms of increasing women's control over their bodies and their sexuality.(11)

The rigour with which Lotta Femminile brought the personal to bear on every issue, and the lucidity of their analyses made other groupings take them seriously, though it was not until 1972-3 that the themes they addressed were discussed more generally within the movement. Even then, as one feminist recalls: 'we had no words for talking about our sexuality, and to speak of our personal problems as central during a meeting seemed absurd.'(12)

But it was through rethinking the body as a site of identity and power, with the help of books such as the Boston Women's Health Book Collective's 'Our Bodies, Ourselves', (translated into Italian in 1970), that its relegation to the 'private', and therefore 'apolitical' sphere, was challenged. Women's experience and the practice of starting from experience and everyday life was counterposed to a politics saturated with ideological formulations. Instead of a politics in which the problem of power was defined in terms of State power, feminism proposed a new politics based on the transformation of everyday social relations. Thus, it gave a specific content to the rather abstract notions of prefigurative and direct action propagated by the Student Movement.(13)

The part played by Lotta Femminista in the formative years of the Italian women's movement has been largely identified with their responsibility for the 'wages for housework' demand. Whilst other feminists explored the cultural and social dimensions of women's oppression, the Lotta Femminista collectives focused their attention on the 'material', economic exploitation of women in the home, which, they said, underpinned all the other aspects of their situation. Their analyses are reminiscent of the Pisan Theses, which had been so influential in the students' movement, and, indeed, a common thread runs from the '<u>operaism</u>' of the '60's through to the 'Paduan theses' of the following decade.(14) The Lotta Femminista analysis was simple but novel. It applied Marxist categories to the role of women in the reproduction of labour-power (as

mother and housewife), and claimed that a vast amount of surplus value was being extracted by capital from the female proletariat. The ordinary woman's position was, in many respects, analogous to that of the prostitute, only she did not even get paid for her services. The demand for wages was therefore essential for the 'recomposition' of the proletariat.(15) In the 1971 'Programmatic Manifesto of Housewives in the Neighbourhood', Lotta Femminista put forward the vision of a society in which the state would pay men and women for housework. There would be neighbourhood canteen, a drastic reduction in working hours, the elimination of unpleasant work and night shifts, and the building of free and beautiful housing.(16)

In retrospect, the Lotta Femminista approach seems reductively economic. It bears the hallmark of a Marxism which tries to make sense of social processes without relinquishing or adding to the categories supplied by reading Capital and the Grundrisse. Moreover, as Andre Gorz has observed, the demand to extend waged relationships into every area of people's lives (thereby affirming the 'operaist' conception of society as factory) is not necessarily progressive:

> 'The logical conclusion of this argument is that professional prostitution is an advance over the traditional couple, and that women's liberation requires the transfer of all family-based tasks to the public services. Emancipation will be consummated only when the full-scale statisation of relations has eliminated the family as the last vestige of civil society.

> This line of demands obviously conflicts with the struggle to redefine relations within couples and to achieve a balanced, freely chosen distribution of household tasks between equal male and female partners.'(17)

The 'wages for housework' campaign provoked a considerable debate internationally as well as within Italy, and brought the issue of domestic labour to the centre of the stage.(18)

While acknowledging the validity of criticisms made of Lotta Femminista, it needs to be said that they tackled problems which were crucial. As Maria Rosa Dalla Costa's pamphlet 'The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community' shows, their analysis of housework and reproduction brought them to propose and theorise political action around the problems of housing, transport and nurseries, which the main organisations of the Left treated as mere adjuncts to the struggles in the factories. They took up the struggles of prostitutes who had otherwise been regarded exclusively as victims.(19) However, the relative marginalisation of Lotta Femminista within the Italian women's movement stemmed from their tendency to bring everything back to the 'fundamentals' of economic exploitation at a time when feminists were trying to deal with the complexities of relations at every level in society. While Lotta Femminista's demands remained on paper, the activities of the radical democratic wing of the movement had much more resonance.

The Movimento delle Donne Italiane (MLD) put forward a programme in June 1970 which combined elements of the anti-authoritarian politics of '68 with the perspectives

of the Radical Party, to which it was formally affiliated. Unlike the Marxists, they stated that it was no longer valid in advanced industrial societies to distinguish between struggles in the structure and struggles in the superstructure; they were all equally valid, and liberation had to be in all spheres of life. MLD's demands were divided into four sections: firstly, those aiming to win for women the right to control their own bodies (free contraception; legalisation and liberalisation of abortion with the provision of free medical services); secondly, demands against 'psychological conditioning and behaviour models' (elimination of gender discrimination in schools; attacks on myths (of motherhood etc.)); thirdly, demands for the elimination of economic exploitation (socialisation of services; socially controlled public nurseries); and fourthly, legal equalities (civil disobedience versus sexual discrimination, action versus male authoritarianism e.g. surnames; proposals of laws through the use of referenda). This perspective was important because it promoted a fight against the 'values and behaviour' of a society which was described as 'patriarchal' and 'clerical', as well as 'capitalist'. Furthermore, it put forward a line of action which was neither integrationalist nor purely anti-institutional, but envisaged law-making as well as law-breaking.(20)

A radical lay culture and politics has traditionally been weak within Italian society. It has been squeezed between the forces of the Church and Christian Democracy, and the forces of Communist Party, neither of which have

distinguished themselves for championing individual and civil liberties.(21)

In the 1960's, radical opinion was represented primarily through publications like the magazine L'Espresso, rather than through formal political structures; the Radical party was not refounded until 1967 (after its dissolution four years previously). Radicals played no significant role in the 1968-9 social movements as an independent force. However, they were well placed in the following decade to take advantage of the liberatory impulses coursing through Italian society.

The Radical Party itself had a flexible federal structure, which was open to collectives and individuals who wanted to adhere to it for limited periods and over specific objectives. Unlike strict Leninist organisation, this allowed for great political sensitivity to demands and pressures coming from social movements. The Radicals' politics developed anti-authoritarianism and demands for greater civil freedoms - demands which other organisations treated as deviations from the 'class struggle'. They drew on ideas coming from the United States, where the movements of women's liberation and gay liberation were well established before they had any counterparts in Italy.(22) Although they remained a small force numerically, during the first half of the 1970's the Radicals took a number of crucial initiatives in conjunction with the embryonic new social movements.(23) The most important of these centred on the issue of women's rights.

Growth of a Mass Movement

The Abortion Campaign

The campaigns in favour of divorce and abortion, and against sexual violence, which became central political and social issues in the mid '70's, marked a new stage in the development of feminism in Italy. The small groups' consciousness-raising and other activities, which were structured around attempts to rethink politics starting from women's 'otherness', were overtaken by 'public' events in the traditional political arena. The sudden and massive growth in the 'women's movement', which followed the extraparliamentary Left's adoption of the MLD's initiatives, was problematic in many respects for the early pioneers. Lotta Femminile, for example, rejected the very notions of equality within the male-defined institutions and polity. The idea of the family, which a sizeable part of the pro-divorce lobby said would be strengthened by defending the laws against Church attacks, was anathema to these feminists. It looked as if the new politics would be taken over by the male-dominated parties and organisations. However, it was out of these conflicts that feminism developed, whilst the New Left organisations, which emerged out of 1968, found themselves riven by contradictions.

The demand for abortion rights as 'a woman's right to choose' was promoted by CISA, (Centro Italiano Sterilizzazione e Aborto), following the efforts of the MLD to gain support for a campaign initiated in 1971. Of all the mobilisations, action on abortion was perhaps the most significant in the creation of a mass feminist movement. Demonstrations were

enormous; in 1975, 25,000 demonstrated, and the following year the number rose to 100,000. The collection of signatures (500,000 were needed to call a referendum) ended by getting the support of some 800,000 people. Furthermore, women organised 'illegal' abortions, and then denounced themselves publicly ('autodenuncia').(24) Abortion was a single issue, but it was an issue which embodied in microcosm a whole set of social conflicts.

The practice of civil disobedience and illegality brought activists into confrontations with the authorities, and challenged established legislative procedures and social values. And the use of the referendum (which had in fact first been used by the Christian Democrats wanting to repeal the divorce laws), opened up new possibilities in exploiting constitutional rights to enhance popular mobilisations. Not since 1968 had there been such a revival in grass-roots political activity. But the feminist approach to the abortion issue gave new dimensions to the struggle against authoritarian power structures in society by showing how they were organised by men and through masculine discourses.

The demand for women's right to free and safe abortion was not exclusive to Italy in the mid '70's, but it had greater implications in this country than in many others because of the power of the Catholic Church. Lesley Caldwell writes:

> 'The Church's attitude to the family, in particular its insistence on the primacy of reproduction and the rejection of sexuality, has helped to create and justify a repressive set of formulations ... and even the construction of laws which distinguish

> the importance of crimes
> according to whether they are
> committed by men or women.'(25)

The price paid by women was very great; in 1974 the Italian weekly, Panorama, reported that all women had either had an abortion or knew a friend who had. In circumstances in which contraceptives were not widely available, and ignorance about sex widespread, abortions functioned as a sort of birth control. This phenomenon was not new, but was the product of centuries - a largely unspoken and yet pervasive reality, which testified to an extreme discrepancy between legal and official discourses, and women's experiences. In the eyes of the Church, abortion was a terrible sin, and for the State it was a crime punishable by a five year sentence. But in the mid '70's the private, individual and clandestine 'solution' was no longer tolerable to many hundreds of thousands of women, who publicly protested their sense of outrage.(26)

It was this dramatic emergence into the public sphere of personal experiences not previously regarded as political which made the campaign over abortion quite unlike traditional mobilisations. The role of the pioneering feminists was crucial in this respect; they prepared and anticipated the sudden diffusion of consciousness-raising, the search for new vocabularies with which to speak about women's experiences, and the exploration of group dynamics. The very repressiveness of the Italian situation created conditions favourable to the making of connections between the issue of abortion and a whole complex of social relations. Lesley Caldwell has written:

> 'The connections between abortion and procreation, between abortion and sexuality, between our ideas of ourselves as mothers and as sexual beings were opened up. Some groups drew parallels between the violence of abortion and the ways in which, at some level, we live heterosexual encounters and penetration as violence ... Others ... looked at the way women live their sexuality linked to their biological potential for motherhood and what its implications are; motherhood as something both desired and refused ... They also linked our conscious and unconscious attitudes to this potential to the social conditions that prevent it happening.'(27)

In short, feminist politics transformed abortion, from a civil rights issue, into a struggle over how power was being exercised in society. This process involved not just the State or the Church as institutions, but the micro relations of everyday life.

Through mass mobilisations and a campaign of civil disobedience over abortion, the women's movement established itself as a national force. Political parties looked for ways of responding to the challenge. Above all, the parties of the Left sought to present bills which navigated the dangerous waters between the demands of the movement (and their echoes within their own women's sections), and the anxieties of the Christian Democratic opinion. This problem was particularly great for the PCI, which in the late '70's sought a 'historical compromise' with the Christian Democrats. When, however, legislation was eventually passed in 1978 legalising abortion, the law bore all the hallmarks of an unfavourable compromise. A number of clauses limited

women's right to choose by making it compulsory to consult with a doctor or social worker, instituting a seven day meditation period and requiring parental permission for under-18's. Most importantly, medical staff were given the right to conscientious objection. This clause was effectively used by powerful opponents within the hospitals to make it extremely difficult for women to have legal abortions. In other words, the mass movement and the majority vote in the referendum counted for little when their demands were translated into the language and procedures of the institutions. As Gianna Pomata has written, the logic of the party system underpinned the 'systematic collusion between medical corporativism and state power'; the predominantly male doctors had been given the function by the state of supervising the social control of reproduction and the exercise of power over the female patient.(28)

Although the abortion legislation of 1980 did marginally improve women's situation, and opened up some space within the institutions for further struggles, the results were largely delusory. However, the strength of the movement derived from its roots in civil society as an autonomous force; the legislative moments had always been regarded as secondary. In this sense, it was very different from the earlier historical movement for women's suffrage, which had focused its energies on opening up the institutions to women voters. The movement in the mid '70's was permeated by a deep antipathy towards the State and disillusionment with parliamentary democracy. When the mobilisation around abortion subsided in the late '70's, organisation around the issue,

which had given rise to a dense network of collectives, ad hoc bodies, and friendships, survived.

The mass movement at a national level gave way to much more particularist, localised and pluralistic forms of action and organisations. Feminists organised around questions of health, sexuality and childcare, and sought to work through their own situations at work or in the community, rather than through general mobilisations. For the movement, the abortion issue had been crucial because it stood for a whole experience of oppression and injustice; the struggle for control by women of their own bodies was a primary moment of self-definition and identity-formation. It was the starting point for a redefinition of the objects and methods of political action itself, and not an isolated 'single issue'. The struggle for the control of biological functions involved a critique of dominant values in society, and how these were articulated in medical, religious and other discourses. The particular issues of abortion, contraception, health and so on focused challenges which ultimately questioned how the 'body politic' itself was constituted.

Women and the Unions

The women's movement of the 1970's was mainly composed of women from middle class families who had gone through further education. The student movement had been the principal political experience of the pioneers of Italian feminism. While the 'emancipationist' tradition was strong within the Communist and Socialist Parties and in the trade unions, the new feminism was largely brought in 'from the outside' in the mid '70's. That is to say, it was the

women in the extraparliamentary groups and the women officials in the unions who acted as intermediaries between 'the movement' and women workers. In Milan, the role of women identified with the 'union left' ('sinistra sindacale') was especially important, notably in the FIM-CISL.(29) They were active in the education, research and training work of the union, which expanded considerably in the early '70's, and in the 150 Hours schemes. This work brought them into contact with large numbers of shopfloor 'delegates', and with ordinary workers wanting to catch up on their education.(30)

The key figures in bringing the ideas of the women's movement into the factories, however, were the women delegates. With the help of the various organisers, they were responsible for setting up women's collectives within sections of the unions, and in establishing women's commissions in Factory Councils and coordinating bodies between women in all the Confederations. In 1976-7, many autonomous women's groupings grew up in this way. Usually these efforts to get together as women met with hostility; when the 'Coordinamento delle Donne' met in Milan it was denounced by officials of the FIOM as a 'sex talking-shop'. This was not surprising since a whole set of assumptions about trade unionism were being called in question, and normal procedures were being broken (separate meetings, for example, were seen as 'divisive'). The iconography of the workers' movement and the accepted forms of discourse were no longer taken as 'natural'.(31)

One of the first public manifestations of the new feminism within the unions was the presence of several women

speakers on the platform making 'collective interventions' at union conferences. Then at demonstrations, women workers organised themselves in separate contingents. They carried colourful banners, shouted feminist slogans and publicly celebrated 'sisterhood' in a context which had traditionally defined itself in terms of 'fraternity'. And in the workplace too, women held meetings separately from the men in order to build up the confidence that their presence had eroded. There was a sense that women had to express their opinions and feelings in their own way, rather than seeking always to conform to the norms set down by the men. In fact, feminine modes of speaking and listening were positively evaluated. An account of a woman trade union organiser reveals the discovery of a new identity in language:

> 'It was through listening to a
> male leader that I too would
> succeed sooner or later in speaking
> in the same way; starting calmly,
> to put people at their ease,
> accelerating with a slow accumulation
> of details and vibrant denunciations
> of exploitation, and culminating with
> a rapid crescendo, enumerating
> struggles and initiatives ... (Later)
> I came to perceive that my words had
> no sound ... it was as if I was mute
> among other women ... Now I myself
> spoke, laughed, got worked-up,
> contradicted myself.'(32)

Within the unions, the application of feminist critiques meant taking apart the abstract definitions of democracy and participation which had come out of the movements of 1968-9. It was becoming clear that most of the demands and gains had not been as 'egalitarian' as everyone had proclaimed.

Women's wages were on average 12% lower than those of men, while 67% of women as opposed to 23% of male workers were in the lowest grades. They had the worst paid, least skilled jobs and little opportunity to become more qualified.(33) Already, as has been seen, during the Hot Autumn women workers protested against their situation, and came into conflict with the unions as a result. However, it was not until the 1970's that they began to systematically criticise them for ignoring their needs and aspirations. Women workers too had, in one way or another, accepted a definition of themselves in terms of their class and not their gender. The language and frames of reference of the unions tended to exclude or stigmatise anything which seemed to encourage division or promote differences between workers. According to their rhetoric, all workers were equal. It took the growth of a mass women's movement in society at large to stimulate and encourage criticisms of union traditions.(34)

Much of the initial impulse behind the criticisms came from within the union Left, which extended an existing repertoire of analyses to examine women's situation in the modern factory. Demands around wage equalisation, the reduction of grades and the elimination of piece-work, which had previously been related to the semi-skilled ('operaio comune'), were applied to women workers. The issues of health and safety, and of child care provision were particularly important in establishing the connections between the different aspects of women's lives.(35)

Furthermore, the analyses made by Panzieri and others of how machinery and technology were not neutral but designed to subordinate the worker, were re-elaborated to show how they were man-made for men. In short, a tradition of rank-and-file militancy forged in the 1960's, and propagated by the extraparliamentary groups, was adapted to express the disaffection of a generation of women worker activists, who organised independently of the unions' formal structures. They dreamt of a new union in which:

> 'the divisions of labour are overcome, breaking down the barriers between who does the negotiating, who proposes policies and who carries them out... everyone must be put in the position of knowing, developing and participating, thereby intensifying the struggle against hierarchism and personal competitiveness.'(36)

For the activists of the women's coordinating groups, the union was still the preferred organisation for bringing about social change; in this respect their outlook was fully consistent with that of the union Left. However, for feminists it was not simply a question of adding 'women's issues' to the union's agendas. The women's movement had developed ways of looking at the world that subverted deep-set assumptions about the centrality of waged work to projects of social change. It pointed to the contradictions between women's values and desires, and those sanctioned in the world of work. Paola Piva, an official of the engineering workers federation noted:

> 'Shorn of domestic tasks, we find our specificity in our sexuality and maternity, which we do not know how to incorporate into the strategy of the working class. We live out this uncertainty ... in personal terms in relation to maternity. From time to time we discover in ourselves a desire for children, which we have to repress, or we have doubts as to whether in the end this work is 'made for us'. It is then that we remember that there exists a solid opposition between production and maternity. The two processes develop in separate cycles - cycles which clash and which are more highly valued in as far as they exclude one another.'(37)

Traditionally, women union activists had had to conform to the dictates of a 'man's world', and needed to be 'superwomen' to stand on an equal footing with male unionists. What the new feminism proposed, however, was that the work situation should be changed to accommodate the different needs and rhythms of women's lives.

This vision proved difficult to translate into concrete terms. A book entitled Caged Water (Acqua in Gabbia), written by two women organisers, is interesting in that it gives a strong sense of women's estrangement from the unions in the late '70's. The 'water' metaphor is evoked to counterpose woman as natural force/movement/life to the cages men construct around their lives. While this recourse to 'essences' played an important part in establishing women's identity (again, it is the body which is the site and the symbol for this), it tended to provide a means for condemning the existing state of things rather than elaborating an alternative.(38) Yet the implications for change were fundamental.

A series of demands, from the call for paid time-off for childcare for both men and women, to proposals for job-sharing and more part-time work, suggested the desire for a drastic reorganisation of working hours. Feminist arguments started from the premises that waged work was not the only or most important work, and that it should be subordinated to human needs, not vice versa. When unions continued to campaign for more rigidly defined working hours within the framework of a fixed working week, such notions were tantamount to heresy. They were described as being objectively favourable to capitalist requirements for a more flexible, de-skilled and un-unionised workforce, and as heralding a return to traditional gender roles. But as the authors of Acqua in Gabbia write, this response often assumed that such a solution was alright for intellectuals, but not for the mass of workers:

> 'Yet, women workers don't only have material needs, (e.g. the full wage). It could be that, on the contrary, there is an uneven but positive search to satisfy other needs ... many want to do other more stimulating things and to do them straight-away, as their participation in the 150 Hours scheme shows ... The real drama is that, while the contradiction between a consciousness of the right to live better and the constant worsening of working and living conditions gets sharper, the union offers a regressive solution.'(39)

However, the utopian discourse implicit in feminist writings like Acqua in Gabbia (which, because it records interviews and discussions, reflects a more diffuse current

of opinion) sprang up in inimical circumstances. In the late '70's, the union leaderships were more attentive to the pressures of party politics than to the demands of the new social movements. Their response to the economic crisis was to concentrate on bread-and-butter issues, and, in the name of realism, to avoid more ambitious and de-stabilising projects. While there was a flurry of activity involving conferences, inquiries, committees and so on to deal with the 'woman's question', demands for paternity leave, fixed quotas of jobs for women, and for changes in labour processes designed to accommodate women workers, went by the board. Nor was the language of realism exclusive to the male leaderships. A new generation of women organisers stressed the need to work within the institutions, whilst the "68ers' found themselves more and more marginalised, and looked outwards to the movement for ideas and support. The great hope in the unions as the means for women's liberation was eclipsed.(40)

Feminism: Beyond the Crisis of the Left

The final years of the '70's were marked by the collapse and fragmentation of social movements and collective action. The anniversary of '68 was more a burial service attended by the so-called veterans than a moment of revival. The disintegration of the New Left, the integration of the unions into the political system, the terrible demise of the movement of '77, and the ascendancy of terrorism were so many markers in a desolate political landscape. The term 'riflusso' (the reflux) was often used to indicate that the tide had turned,

and that a historical phase was over. The women's movement, too, was deeply affected by this political climate; circuits of information were interrupted and intersecting circles of friendship and acquaintance split apart. The feeling that great changes could be carried through by collective mobilisation was weakened by prevailing doubts and uncertainties. Yet, while the feminist project suffered from the crisis, it was not itself at the centre of that crisis. And it was precisely this distance from the dominant forms of oppositional politics, which were the main victims, that made it the carrier of hopes for a future regeneration of social movements in the following decade.

What was in crisis at the end of the decade was a historical model of social and political transformation - a model which contemporaries spoke of as 'Marxist'. Whether they were right or wrong in evoking Marx is not at issue here; clearly there were major discrepancies between theoretical work calling itself Marxist, and the more instrumental interpretations of his ideas. However, some cardinal ideas and beliefs can be pointed to as playing an important part in shaping the perspectives of the social movements of 1968 and after. They constituted a sort of 'vulgar Marxist' commonse se about who would change the world, how it would be changed, and what would be put in its place. Its key terms were 'the working class', 'revolution' and 'socialist society'.

It is not necessary to repeat what has already been discussed (especially in relation to the student movement

and to red terrorism), but it is perhaps worth commenting more generally on the 'totalising' nature of the political project associated with Marxism. By this is meant the tendency to imagine and to construct identities in which differences and conflicts are resolved in larger wholes. In this vision, the individual and the collectivity merge into one another, and divisions are transcended. This conception can be seen in the idea that the working class through the processes of immiseration, subjection to Taylorism and/or education by the party, would become its true self, i.e. the revolutionary class. The movement of history promised the unfolding of an imminent consciousness. The individual would become his/her true self through the realisation of a class identity. Accordingly, the future socialist society appeared as conflict-free; the abolition of class would entail the removal of the divisions and inequalities of wealth and power at the root of conflict. The movement necessary to carry through the revolution against the state would then become one with the state.

Even though this 'totalising' vision was rarely manifested in a pure form, it can be identified as a recurrent feature of oppositional politics. It is apparent in the enthusiasm for the Russian, Chinese or Cuban versions of socialism, and in myths and narratives of class struggle, which dominated the horizons of a generation. It was very much a part of the legacy of the communist tradition. But, while it had served to motivate mobilisations in the past, such a body of ideas, which were more akin to articles of

faith than to thought-out ways of analysing the world, suddenly became redundant in time of crisis.

The disarray on the Left was greatest where there was most investment in the 'totalising' vision. Among the 'lost', the so-called 'orphans of Mao' were especially numerous. However, the shorter term precipitants of the Left's demise need to be put in the context of epochal changes in Western capitalist societies. In this perspective, it is not a question of abberrations within a Marxist politics which reveal inadequacies of analysis; rather, it is a question of the insufficiencies of a model constructed to analyse to an industrial society to deal with a post industrial one. This gap between social knowledges and their objects of analysis can be discussed in terms of a 'crisis of reason'; in the words of Aldo Gargani:

> 'We call the crisis of rationality the realisation that the house of our knowledge is in fact uninhabited because of changing social relations: the relations between men and women, between parents and children, between institutions and the governed, also our knowledge of politics, music, literature, science, is transformed. That crisis is traced in the situation in which we feel an accumulation of energies that go beyond the saturated conventions and rules which at one time coincided with the extremes of our awareness.'(41)

What the late '70's crisis raised was not whether this or that political line within the Marxist Left was correct, but more fundamental questions.

Some of the questions were as follows: Was it any longer possible to see the industrial working class as the

privileged agent of change? Could not social conflicts in the spheres of reproduction (and the identities formed there) be as significant as the traditional ones in the sphere of production? Did it make sense to conceive of 'revolution' in Marxist terms in a complex, modern society? What was meant by a 'socialist society' or 'socialism'? In other words, the fundamental tenets of the workers' movement - tenets which provided the model for all those opposed to the existing order - were no longer taken as given.

In large part, what was referred to as the 'crisis of Marxism' or the 'crisis of reason' was a moment of confusion and a consequence of defeats. An intellectual hegemony established in the wake of 1968 was visibly faltering. However, it was also a moment of fruitful exploration. This was particularly true in the case of feminism, which owed much to Marxist politics, but which was breaking free from its tutelage. The women's movement was thrown into crisis in as far as its possibilities for action, and its ways of thinking were conditioned by other political forces (parties, unions, social movements). But it was, above all, 'the others' that were at sea. Feminists were better placed to take advantage of new spaces and freedoms afforded by the crumbling of orthodoxies, and thereby to make themselves a cultural-political pole of attraction.

During the mid '70's, the women's movement had, to some extent, already exercised this function in relation to certain social groups. The formation of a gay movement in Italy owed much to the feminist example (consciousness-raising, critiques of Left politics, social support), and its influence was also

felt in parts of the youth movement. Its power was such that it was able to provoke an irreversible crisis in the New Left organisations by attacking their neo-Leninism.[42] The women's movement celebrated its qualities as a movement, namely: its loose, non-authoritarian structures (open-meeting sovereignty, small groups); its stress on means rather than ends, and on prefigurative and direct action; its preference for personal and 'natural' modes of behaviour and speech. In a sense, the women's movement spoke on behalf of all those wanting to get back to an anti-authoritarian, 'movementist politics'. As such it presented the most coherent humanist alternative to the politics of red terrorism.[43] Moreover, the women's movement represented an alternative politics to that of the workers' movement.

Melucci succinctly sums up the differences between the practices of the women's movement and the workers' movement:

> 'The women's movement affirms another freedom; it is no longer the freedom from need, but the freedom to need; no longer the struggle for equality, but for difference; no longer the freedom to act, but the freedom to be. The rupture and discontinuity with the Marxist and workers' movement tradition appear to be irreparable.'

He argues that the themes developed by the women's movement have effectively displaced those elaborated over the years by the workers' movement:

> 'It is perhaps not clear at what point we have arrived, but the themes of identity and difference, the precedence of the right to be over the right to act, and the demand for living spaces free from society's control ... are destined to occupy a central place in the field of social conflicts.'[44]

While the feminist movement is a movement of and for women, its effects have transformed the field of political and social action. As Alain Touraine writes, the consequences of feminism were felt by anyone contemplating radical social change;

> 'The women's movement is a movement of liberation not only of women but of men by women. One of the most basic aspects is its opposition to all military and financial models of organisation ... It represents a will to organise one's own life, to form personal relationships, to love and be loved, to have a child ... Of all social movements, the women's movement is the one most able to oppose the growing hold exercised by giant corporations over our daily lives.'(45)

It is this capacity of the feminist movement to generate new ways of looking at society, and of drawing new maps with which to read everyday realities, that makes it so significant a force for change. It is an 'emergent' politics in that feminism has (to use Williams' words) created 'new meanings and values, new practices, new significancies and experiences'. Perhaps not since the formative years of the workers' movement has there been such an interrogation of the ground-rules and language of politics. Whilst many of the movements coming out of 1968 were caught up in the rhetoric and narratives of the 'class struggle epic', feminists slowly freed themselves of the burdens of a past that had little to offer in understanding contemporary problems. As Melucci has observed, it was when the women's movement had gone through its phase of presenting a united front at all costs, and begun to open itself to a plurality of approaches that it acquired a crucial role in

constructing a 'post-political politics'.

With the collapse of illusions in revolution, and the undermining of the 'totalising' vision, new possibilities were created for political activity orientated to transforming social relations at a micro and everyday level. This meant handling questions of power and decision-making starting 'from below', and from the personal situation rather than 'from above' in terms of state power, as was usual on the Left. Furthermore, it meant thinking about the many ways of creating identities, instead of evoking an essentialist notion of class or gender consciousness. Diversity, pluralism and difference, not homogeneity and sameness were the watchwords of the new social movements. In the words of Anna Rossi-Doria: 'The aim is not to be 'different' from what is 'normal', but rather to discover 'normality' in differences'.(46)

Feminism has tended to become a paradigm for those oppositional forces within advanced capitalist societies which have not identified themselves with the workers' movement. This can partly be seen as the result of a division of labour; the women's movement has organised around questions in the so-called private sphere (especially the spheres of reproduction e.g. sexuality, child-bearing and rearing, health and education), whilst the workers' movement has organised in the public spheres of waged work and party politics. Or, to put it another way, the women's movement has made itself felt, first and foremost, in the realm regarded as the 'natural' within the dominant culture, whilst the workers' movement has defined itself in relation to the work

of transforming and subduing Nature. However, in the late '70's profound shifts were being registered not only in how these areas of human life were being defined, but in their relationship to one another. For example, the whole idea of progress, which had been linked to increasing industrialisation and technological development in Marxist as well as Liberal thinking, was being questioned. Ecologists and others aligned radical politics with appeals to 'Nature', and opposed dominant definitions of progress. In this context, the women's movement was able to make its demands impinge on general social orientations since the relationship between concepts of 'Nature' and 'Culture' were at the centre of its concerns.

Melucci has written:

> 'The appeal to nature has played an important role in the formation of new collective demands. Nature appears as that which resists external pressures because it escapes instrumental rationality. It presents itself as ... the 'already given' in opposition to the enforced socialisation of the identity imposed by the new forms of domination. But there is, in this appeal, the confused perception that the natural order is a field of action, an object to be produced, and not an 'already given'. The body, desire, biological identity, sexuality are all cultural representations ... 'human nature' can be produced and transformed by social action.'(47)

It is because feminism as a movement has experienced the conflicting pulls between opposed definitions of 'the natural' (and not because it has provided an answer) that it has occupied such a central place in the thinking of new social movements.

If the relevance of feminism to contemporary politics is measured by the indices of membership, votes, numbers attending demonstrations, and other public manifestations of power, then it is clearly of little significance. The impact of the movement on the dominant institutions of public life in Italy has been minimal. However, it makes nonsense to apply such criteria when feminist politics have consistently refused to conform to what has traditionally been defined as Politics. Rather, the women's movement has persisted as a social and counter-cultural 'area of aggregration'.(48) Instead of having organisational structures modelled on the unions and parties of the Left, the women's movement developed its own 'submerged' or 'latent' structures made up of loosely interconnecting collectives and informal groupings. Whilst these too felt the negative consequences of political defeats, they have maintained a capacity for mobilisations. The feminist movement demonstrates the inadequacy of analyses which equate political effectivity and representativeness with organisation. As has been argued throughout this thesis, the most significant forces in society are those which redefine politics itself. Since 1968 in Italy, social movements have been responsible for bringing about major changes in this respect, but none more so than the women's movement.

FOOTNOTES: PART 5

Chapter 25

1. It has been suggested that too much stress has been put on the 1960's and '70's as periods of change, which have been counterposed to the 'immobilism' of the 1950's. Changes were taking place in the '50's which 'prepared' a generation for the future conflicts; see Simonetta Stella, 'Crescere negli anni '50', in Memoria, 2, 1981, pp. 9-35.

2. See Laura Grasso, Compagno padrone (Florence, 1974). The title sums up the issue at stake.

3. Barrington Moore, Injustice, pp. 471-473. However, Barrington Moore's book does not deal at all with how injustice has been perceived differently by men and women historically; whilst this does not invalidate his arguments, it suggests that their claim to universality is very questionable.

4. Lesley Caldwell, Feminism and Politics in the '70's in Italy, Mineograph, unpaged. (I am especially grateful for comments which Lesley Caldwell made of an earlier draft of this chapter.)

5. Laura Grasso, Compagno padrone, p. 36.

6. Carla Ravaioli, 'La donna', in Antonio Gambino, Dal '68 a oggi (Bari, 1980), pp. 319-320.

7. Quoted by L. Caldwell, 'Feminism and Politics'; see also Rosalba Spagnoletti, I movimenti femministi in Italia (Rome, 1976), pp. 40-63.

8. Ibid.; see also Lea Melandri, L'infamia originaria - facciamola finita col Cuore e la Politica (Milan, 1977).

9. Carla Lonzi (Ed.), Sputiamo su Hegel e altri scritti (Milan, 1970), pp. 11-8.

10. Ibid., pp. 77-141.

11. Ibid., pp. 67-77.

12. Interview with Antonella Nappi (June, 1978).

13. Mariella Gramaglia, '1968: il venir dopo e l'andare oltre del movimento femminista', pp. 180-200.

14. Toni Negri, Dall'operaio massa all'operaio sociale, pp. 147-166.

15. Giuliana Pompei, 'Salario per il lavoro domestico'; L'Offensiva, Quaderni di Lotta Femminile (Turin, 1972) pp. 35-47.

16. 'Programmatic Manifesto of Housewives in the Neighbourhood', in Socialist Revolution (July), 1971, pp. 84-7.

17. André Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, p. 40.

18. See Michèle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today (London, 1980), pp. 172-186.

19. Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community (Bristol, 1972).

20. Rosalba Spagnoletti, I movimenti femministi in Italia, pp. 61-79.

21. The Italian Communist Party's campaigns against repression in 1968-69 showed its support for civil rights, and there is a history of its struggles for equal rights, for the abolition of fascist laws etc. which is honourable. However, the party's record also reveals an 'ideological antipathy' to civil rights issues. See L. Ferrajoli and D. Zolo, Democrazia autoritaria, pp. 68-100.

22. The Italian version of the Gay Liberation Movement was Fuori (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano), which in Italian means 'Out'. It started as a review in December 1971, which had women as well as men contributors. In 1974 the national congress decided to take out federal membership with the Radical Party; see Angelo Pezzana (Ed.), Fuori: la politica del corpo (Rome, 1976).

23. Massimo Teodori, 'La storia del Partito Radicale' in M. Teodori, P. Ignazi and A. Panebianco, I nuovi radicali, (Milan, 1977), pp. 14-110.

24. Sandra Chelnov, 'Abortion and the Autonomous Women's Movement', in Socialist Revolution (January-February), 1977, pp. 75-92; Ellen Cantarow, 'Abortion and Feminism in Italy', in Radical America (November-December), 1976, pp. 10-30.

25. L. Caldwell, 'Church, state and family: the women's movement in Italy', in Annette Kuhn (Ed.), Feminism and Materialism (London, 1978), pp. 70-1.

26. L. Caldwell, 'Abortion in Italy', in Feminist Review, 7, (Spring), 1981, pp. 49-65.

27. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

28. A Gianna Pomata article reviewed in Lotta Continua (5-1-82).

29. Flora Bocchio and Antonia Torchi, L'acqua in gabbia - voci di donne dentro il sindacato (Milan, 1978), pp. 27-8.

30. Antonella Nappi and Ida Regalia (Eds.), La pratica politica delle donne (Milan, 1978). This book was written as a series of reflections on the experiences of courses held for women as part of the 150 Hours scheme.

31. F. Bocchio and A. Torchi, L'acqua in gabbia, p. 25.

32. Ibid., p. 126.

33. L. Frey, 'Analisi economica della occupazione femminile in Italia', in L. Frey (Ed.), Occupazione e sottoccupazione femminile in Italia (Milan, 1976).

34. Nella Marcellino, 'La partecipazione femminile e il movimento sindacale', pp. 113-117.

35. Francesco Dambrosio and Mauro Buvalia, 'Ambiente di lavoro e condizione femminile', in Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale, 54-55 (May-August) 1975, pp. 95-109.

36. F. Bocchio and A. Torchi, L'acqua in gabbia, p. 29.

37. Ibid., pp. 53-4.

38. There were, however, great difficulties in trying to think both as a feminist and as a trade unionist. A woman delegate speaking of her problem of making consciousness 'practical' referred to a more general difficulty; 'The women workers today are very interested in discussing the family, sexuality, emancipation ... However, when it comes to doing anything, the discussion always returns to work themes - grades, rises, discrimination etc.'; A. Nappi and I. Regalia (Eds.), La pratica politica delle donne, p. 87.

39. F. Bocchio and Antonia Torchi, L'acqua in gabbia, p. 65.

40. Lynn Froggett and Antonia Torchi, 'Feminism and the Italian Trade Unions', in Feminist Review, 8 (Summer) 1981,

41. Aldo Gargani, Crisi della ragione (Turin, 1979), p. 46; quoted in I. Chambers and L. Curti, Silent Frontiers, p. 27.

42. The most celebrated instance of this was the Lotta Continua national conference of 1976; see L. Bobbio, Lotta Continua, pp. 174-182.

43. L. Boccarossa et al, 'Donne, violenza e identità', in L. Manconi (Ed.), La violenza e la politica.

44. A. Melucci, L'invenzione del presente, pp. 181-182.

45. Quoted in A. Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class, p. 85.

46. Anna Rossi-Doria, 'Conservazione e rottura nel movimento delle donne', in Ombre Rosse, 25 (June) 1978, pp. 12-16.

47. A. Melucci, L'invenzione del presente, p. 140.

48. Ibid., pp. 164-166.

CHAPTER 26: SOME CONCLUSIONS: MOVEMENTS - 'OLD' AND 'NEW'

In the early 1970's, spokesmen for the establishment and ruling groups in countries across the world were calling for the restoration of 'normality'. Law-and-order campaigns were the order of the day. They aimed at nothing short of 'rolling back' the tide of cultural and political radicalism which had challenged the dominant order's hegemony. In their discourses 'reality' was counterposed to 'utopias', and the 'silent majority' to extremist minorities. They made 'realism' into the sober philosophy of the common man, whilst utopians were branded 'fanatics'. But it was not for several years that these arguments began to have their intended impact; namely, the cancellation or invalidation of collective memories of the social movements. One of the purposes of this study has been to go against that current, and to argue that the social movements have had positive consequences for oppressed groups. However, it has tried to produce a version of that past which is neither celebratory nor apologetic.

The argument made by Piven and Cloward that poor people gain most through social movements is amply borne out by the Hot Autumn mobilisations. It was not through 'realism', and by abiding by the laws and procedures of the 'system' that they improved their lot. Rather, it was when workers 'demanded the impossible', and resorted to disruption that they extracted substantial economic concessions, and improved their standing in society. The Fiat workers showed an 'instinctive' understanding of this, whilst the '*operaist*' theorists wrote of the 'strategy of refusal' as almost a political art-form.

What Piven and Cloward have theorised was the popular wisdom of the movements of the late '60's.

However, there is a certain narrowness in Piven and Cloward's analyses, which comes from their insistent pragmatism. Their conception of whether and how movements 'win' and 'lose' makes material gains into the real yardstick of evaluation. This is a corrective to accounts which ignore the basic economic problems of people whose lives are a struggle to survive. But they, in turn, overlook the vital cultural dimensions of conflict. Poor people invest their very material conditions of existence with meaning no less than do the better-off, and their rebellion against hardship is simultaneously concerned with ideas of justice and morality. This helps to explain why the act of deliberately disobeying foremen was so crucial in unleashing factory militancy, and why one of the major gains of the Hot Autumn has to be measured in terms of the sense of dignity won by people who had long been denied it.(1)

Impoverishment and deprivation have never been sufficient causes of social protest, as Barrington Moore has demonstrated. But in the 1960's, in advanced capitalist countries, they became less significant in that social movements developed which were not made up of poor people, but of disaffected students, intellectuals and members of the middle class - protagonists who were later at the centre of the new social conflicts of the 1970's. Conflicts (including industrial conflicts) were increasingly about the 'freedom to need' rather than 'freedom from need'. Alain Touraine was one of the most perceptive

observers of this transformation, which Piven and Cloward seem to overlook.

Touraine, at the time, noted that the movements of the late '60's involved struggles over control and decision-making rather than over the ownership of the means of production, and that they were about how society as a whole was organised. Later he called this the struggle over the 'social control of historicity' - meaning:'the great cultural orientations - patterns of knowledge, type of investment and cultural model'.(2)

Touraine's approach is much more illuminating than Marxist structuralist analyses, which separate out struggles into 'economic', 'political' and 'ideological'. It helps make sense of the Italian 1968-9 conflicts, which involved fundamental issues about the exercise of power not only by governments, but in everyday relations in all spheres of life. Mass disruption subverted the timetables and shifts which imposed a mechanical model of society on people's lives,irrespective of their bodily rhythms. The movements disputed the pre-planned organisation of urban spaces, and the separation of public institutions and workplaces from their surrounding neighbourhoods.

It is Touraine's contention that the 1968 movement was more radical than its protagonists realised. They often continued to 'read' society according to the grid of Marxist theories, which, he argues, were less and less able to explain the conflicts of post industrial societies. 1968, in this perspective, represents the beginning of the end for an 'old' politics,in which the industrial working class is the central protagonist, the unions and parties are the main

organisations, and versions of Marxism are the dominant theories. At the same time, it is the 'moment of birth' for a 'new' politics, in which social movements become the vehicles and interpreters of the needs of emergent social groups. Again, Touraine's analyses, as the thesis has shown, provide crucial insights into the changing politics of the 1970's. It was feminism which produced the utopian visions and analyses for a future society, whilst the workers' movement lost its capacity to represent other groups. The process whereby social conflicts were translated from the factories into the rest of society was reversed; the struggles of women, youth, marginals and others fed back into industrial disputes.

It is difficult, however, on the basis of Touraine's model to understand how the 'new' social movements grew out of the workers' movement, while making themselves autonomous from it. He counterposes 'new' and 'old' too absolutely. This has a polemical function, but it also stems from his construction of an evolutionary and linear model of development. Touraine identifies social conflicts according to whether they are 'typical' of pre-industrial, industrial or post industrial societies.(3) While these 'ideal types' are useful in analysing general tendencies, and for making prophesies, they do not explain the messiness and confusions of the historical process. The Italian case, which has intrigued historians and sociologists because of its combination of 'backwardness' and 'modernity', is especially difficult to place in Touraine's analytic boxes.(4)

The Fiat workers' struggles are an interesting example of how the most radical critiques of industrial capitalist society were made by industrial workers. Little in these conflicts conforms to Touraine's model of conflicts typical of industrial societies. A similar observation can be made of how certain 'old' forms of resistance, such as movements for regional autonomy, are only 'old' in so far as 'progress' has been historically associated with centralisation and the formation of the nation-state. In a contemporary context, they provide a basis for resisting centralisation and conceptualising a new organisation of society, in which diversity and decentralisation are the means and the ends of social action. It could be argued that Italy, which has for over a century been seen to suffer from regionalism and a weak state, now has advantages over those countries like France and Britain, which are far more centralised, both culturally and politically.

The inadequacies of a linear model of development can also be seen in how histories have often been written from the point of view of the victors. History written by Marxists, for example, has tended to focus on the victorious classes; the bourgeoisie of the French Revolution, and the proletariat of the Russian Revolution have represented paradigms with which to evaluate the 'success' and 'failure' of social movements.(5) Gramsci is but one of a tradition in this respect. If the 'losers' are taken into consideration, it is because, like the 'utopian socialists' of Engels' account, they prepared the way for the class or party 'of the future'.

However, the new social movements broke with that tradition. They challenged its definitions of 'success' and 'failure'. This is because their protagonists have, in that version of history, been classified as unimportant as a group (or only important as members of a class), and because so-called 'losers' have inspired them in their own struggles. Thus, feminists discovered a hidden women's history, and drew on libertarian and anti-authoritarian traditions, while youth protest claimed marginality and deviance as identities.(6)

The 1960's ended with the triumph of Marxist ideologies within the opposition movements - a triumph which was more dramatic in Italy because of the weight of the Communist tradition and the impact of the Hot Autumn events. The 'losers' (the libertarian, underground, anarchist, situationist and other elements) seemed destined to join their theoretical ancestors in the 'dustbin of history'. Their plight was pitifully symbolised in the fates of Giuseppe Pinelli and Pietro Valpreda. Yet, these political and cultural currents addressed many of the problems, and asked many of the questions which were put back on the agenda by the new movements.

The answers which the historical libertarians gave to the political problems of the '60's and '70's were often stale and dogmatic (the total isolation of the anarchist organisations before and after 1968 stems from this limitation), but they showed that history held other possibilities than the raison d'état of the victors. They provided some of the raw materials for a radical rethinking of politics in which

the party, the unions, the centralised state and the industrial working class were no longer the lynch-pins.(7) With 1968, utopianism returned to the political scene. Ideas long regarded as dead and buried, such as council communism, federalism, insurrectionism, communes and so on suddenly came alive.

The distinction between 'old' and 'new' movements can, nonetheless, be useful if it does not assume an evolutionary schema. It makes it possible to evaluate the adequacy of political orientations in changing social situations. It can be said, for example, that the Leninist and Marxist revivalism of the 1960's was a return to a historical legacy which had largely negative consequences for the development of social movements in the 1970's. Likewise, the attempt to reconstruct a 'popular culture' according to models provided by Socialist and Communist traditions in Italy and China, was 'utopian' in the pejorative sense. In both these instances, the past was used by protagonists to create orthodoxies, and was made to function teleologically as a stage in the march to social revolution.

The appropriation of a historical legacy was only useful in so far as it was made relevant to contemporary social conflicts. It still left the task of working out ways of abolishing the oppression in personal relationships, and of realising social equality without sacrificing individual freedoms. Whilst the anarchists had historically been more aware of the dangers of authoritarianism and state centralism than the Marxist tradition, its solution - the

abolition of the state - was entirely abstract. Many of the solutions offered in Italy and elsewhere in the 1960's and '70's were similarly flawed, but there was a new awareness that the difficulties were internal to the social movements, and not just the product of external forces (the state, scarcity etc.). The anti-authoritarians were among the first to argue along these lines, while the feminist movement was the first to systematically tackle the social and psychological dimensions of personal oppression.

In the 1970's, it seems that a new politics was emerging, the protagonists of which spoke a different language to the unions and parties of the workers' movement. In Italy, in 1977, their play on words - their 'semiological delinquency' - can be seen as a sort of meta-text of this development. (Perhaps the 'punk' phenomenon in Britain, and the city revolts in Western Europe in the late '70's and early '80's, also articulated this political rupture, which was often realised primarily through cultural forms.)[8] Whilst anarchist, libertarian and other traditions were sometimes appealed to, the new movements did not use their words. These movements used words which made 'un-common sense'; they subverted the accepted meanings of words, and used language to radically shift modes of perception. The basic vocabulary of the 'Left' became problematic.

All words, of course, have meanings in so far as these are socially defined through usage. Meaning is not intrinsic to words, but is generated through their relation to one another within texts, and in relation to the cultural context

of their users. Words are, therefore, particularly interesting to examine as indexes of deeper shifts within a culture. Moments when words drop out of usage, or enter people's vocabularies, and when the meanings of words undergo radical transformations - such moments mark significant changes. Raymond Williams writes:

> 'The variations and confusions of meaning are not just faults in a system or errors of feedback, or deficiencies of education. They are in many cases ... of historical and contemporary substance. Indeed they have often, as variations, to be insisted upon, just because they embody different experiences and readings of experience, and this will continue to be true, in active relationships and conflicts, over and above the clarifying exercises of scholars or committees.'(9)

If conflict and variation is a constant feature of language, it is more pronounced in periods of historical change.

In his studies of English vocabulary, Raymond Williams argues that a number of 'keywords' were radically redefined in the period which saw the formation of industrial capitalism and the emergence of new forms of social conflict. The word 'class' is an interesting example; Williams writes:

> 'The essential history of the introduction of class, as a word which would supercede older names for social divisions, relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited.'(10)

It is argued by Touraine and others that an equivalent social transformation is currently taking place in Western capitalist societies, making notions of 'class' derived from the 19th century inadequate, just as notions of 'rank' were at an earlier date.

Alberto Melucci has commented on the problems of analysing the new social movements in 'class' terms:

> 'The term 'class' is not adequate to express the novelty of the antagonistic conflicts in late capitalist societies, and should eventually be replaced ... we must stop considering classes as definite empirical groups with a certain culture and way of life ... But then does it still make sense to speak of 'class' struggles? Yes, but the conflicts must be thought of as a network of oppositions centered on control over development ... Classes ... have been replaced by a multiplicity of groups which are stratified and intersect in complex ways.'(11)

But Melucci's reservations were a theoretical reflection on a situation in which the older model was already in crisis. The very proliferation of other terms from the late '70's in Italy, such as marginals ('emarginati'), 'emergent groups' ('ceti emergenti'), 'proletarian youth' ('giovani proletari'), 'minorities' ('minoranze'), 'the unprotected' ('non-garantiti') and the 'precarious' ('precari') indexed changing perceptions of social inequalities in terms of exclusion from life opportunities, rather than of economic exploitation in the traditional sense.(12) Furthermore, feminist discussions offered an even more comprehensive critique of economic definitions of class.

The emergence of a new set of words through which subordinate groups represent themselves, or with which they are described, is an important development, but it does not mean that older words have disappeared. 'Working class'

('classe operaia') and 'proletariat' ('proletariato') have no more vanished from the vocabulary than the factory itself has disappeared from society. The persistence of economic poverty and deprivation means that 'poor people' ('poveri') continue to struggle for survival in the midst of plenty. However, the combination of terms (e.g. 'giovani proletari'), and the appropriation of categories such as 'plebians' ('plebe'), which describe pre-capitalist relations, points to a mixing and confusion of words used to analyse social divisions. 'Old' and 'new' conceptions of society jostle and overlap.

Similar 'variations and confusions of meaning' have occurred with other keywords in the patrimony of opposition movements; the terms 'Left' and 'Right', 'Equality', 'Freedom', 'Fraternity', 'Communism', 'Revolution' and others became as problematic as 'Class' in the late '70's. These words, which were touchstones of the workers' movement, evoked a fundamental consensus over political goals within the parties and unions of the 'Left', even though there were sometimes great disagreements about the means for achieving them. In 1968-9, these keywords were once again in vogue, but, over the following decade, the consensus around their meaning disintegrated. The 'movement of '77' and the feminist movement gave new meanings to terms like 'Equality' and 'Freedom', and questioned the value of traditional distinctions between 'Left' and 'Right' in describing the new political movements.(13) Keywords were unloosed from their moorings, and the compass of the 'old' politics went awry.

To insist on the 'variations and confusions of meaning' in the terminology of oppositional politics can be useful in two ways: firstly, the plethora of interpretations of words such as 'Equality/Inequality', 'Freedom' or 'Class' can help understand how people perceive their situations. Secondly, the ambiguities of meaning can be seen as a consequence of a more sceptical view of politics, in which the taken-for-granted and articles of faith are no longer acceptable. In this perspective, it is not just that there is confusion because of the coexistence of 'old' and 'new' conceptions of change, but because the new movements have made openess and conflict into positive features of their politics.(14)

Our understanding of the changes that have taken place in the decade after 1968 is still provisional and fragmentary. It is limited not only by the proximity of the events in time, but by the inadequacies of inherited concepts to deal with a new order of social conflicts. For example, Barrington Moore's analyses of notions of injustice have proved more suitable to deal with conflicts between social classes than between the sexes. Similarly, the concept of 'collective identity', which has proved so useful in analysing social movements, needs to be further elaborated to make sense of the more self-conscious construction/de-construction of social identities within the new movements. However, the approaches that have been considered have been positive in so far as they have made the exploration of the ambiguities and multi-accentuality of social conflicts (and the words used to describe them) into the means of understanding historical processes.

History is full of examples of how social movements have themselves adopted the methods, or reproduced the ideas of their adversaries. Terrible atrocities have been committed in the name of 'Freedom', whilst the word 'Equality' has been used to oppress and enslave. Moments of liberation have almost simultaneously ushered in new oppressions. Thus, the importance of understanding the necessary ambiguities of oppositional ideas and actions is a political as well as a theoretical task. It is a crucial dimension to analyses of social movements; but it is also vital for a new politics, if it is not to reimpose the oppressions it fights against, that it seeks to make disorder productive of a richer life for all. In this sense, social movements are not just the 'means' to achieve 'ends', but themselves constitute an aspect of the future society which is being struggled for.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 26

1. Richard Sennett has written: 'No more urgent business in a life can exist than establishing a sense of personal dignity - if forces beyond one's control call that dignity into question from the time one is a schoolchild, it becomes a prior question to power and possession, and indeed a reason why power and possession are sought after at all'; R. Sennett, Hidden Injuries of Class, p. 171.

2. Alain Touraine, The Voice and the Eye, p. 29.

3. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

4. It should be made clear, however, that Touraine does not work with the model of 'progress' found in Liberal and Marxist thought. Indeed, he criticises it mercilessly. The problem perhaps derives from his attempt to construct models of development in the abstract.

5. James Joll protests against the 'dustbin of history' approach; he writes: 'If the aim of the historian, like that of the artist, is to enlarge our picture of the world, to give us a new way of looking at things, then the study of failure can often be as instructive and as rewarding as the study of success'; James Joll, The Anarchists (London, 1964), pp. 12-3.

6. Sheila Rowbotham's 'Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight against it' is a classic text in this sense. It was translated into Italian with the title 'Esclusa dalla storia' in 1977. It would make an interesting study in its own right to trace the changing representation of the working class in Italian historiography in relation to contemporary political and cultural developments.

7. Richard Sennett's Uses of Disorder is a good example of an imaginative rethinking of anarchist ideas in relation to the problem of constructing utopias in the modern city. Alberto Melucci's Invenzione del presente also owes something to this libertarian tradition.

8. I owe this observation to Martin Chalmers.

9. Raymond Williams, Keywords (London, 1976), p. 26.

10. Ibid., p. 52.

11. Alberto Melucci, New Movements, Terrorism and the Political System, p. 97.

12. Gian Primo Cella, 'Garantiti e non garantiti', in Prospettiva Sindacale, 4 (December) 1978, pp. 56-62.

13. 'In the political field, in the narrow sense, the polarity Left-Right is losing its precision and is, by now, mainly used to identify ... and classify the pre-existing state of things. 'On the Left' is, therefore, what is done or happens within the political space occupied by the forces of the Left. The act of nominating is ... largely tautological'; Elvio Fachinelli, 'Una proposta: non usare i termini 'Sinistra' and 'Destra'', in Lotta Continua (27-10-81); see also Lea Melandri, L'infamia originaria.

14. This is the case argued by Elvio Fachinelli and others in Italy. For a brilliant analysis of the political significance of how language is used, see Trevor Pateman, Language, truth and politics (Nottingham, 1975).

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

All the texts listed here are cited in the thesis, but not all the texts referred to in the footnotes are included. Because the majority of the leaflets of the student movement are not dated or signed, they proved difficult to classify. These are to be found in the Feltrinelli Institute in Milan where they are kept under the general heading 'Movimento Studentesco', which is subdivided into sections for the State and Catholic Universities. Student leaflets from the licei and technical institutes are kept under the heading 'Movimento Studenti Medi'. Furthermore, private collections of leaflets, interviews and fieldnotes are not mentioned, except in the footnotes.

The bibliography is divided into three sections: in Section 1, there is a list of the daily and weekly papers, magazines and journals which were thoroughly consulted in the research. In Section 2, there are the texts of a more general and theoretical nature on social movements and protest. These are mainly cited in Part 1 of the thesis, but some are referred to at a later point. And Section 3 includes all the journal articles and books cited in the thesis, except those already mentioned.

Section 1: Newspapers and Journals

Daily Papers

L'Unità)
) Milanese editions
Il Corriere della Sera)

Weekly and Monthly Papers and Magazines

L'Espresso

Lotta Continua

Potere Operaio

Rinascita

Journals

Aut Aut

Avanguardia Operaia

Classe

Contro Informazione

Dibattito Sindacale

Erba Voglio

Fabbrica e Stato

Inchiesta

Il Manifesto

Il Mulino

Ombre Rosse

Primo Maggio

Problemi del Socialismo

Quaderni Piacentini

Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale

Quaderni Rossi

Re Nudo

Rosso

La Sinistra

Sinistra Proletaria

Section 2: Theories and General Analyses of Social Movements and Social Conflict

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	1970	Classi e Generazioni, Bologna.
	1976	Italia in trasformazione, Bologna.
	1977	Movimento e Istituzione, Bologna.
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